TWELVE

SERMONS

Preached upon

Several Occasions.

By *ROBERT SOUTH*, D. D.

The Second Volume.

The Second Edition Corrected.

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TO THE

Univerſity of *Oxford.*

Reverend and Learned Sirs,

THESE Diſcourſes (moſt of them at leaſt) having by the favour of your Patience *had the Honour of your* Audience, *and being now Publiſhed in another and more laſting way, do here humbly caſt themſelves at your Feet, imploring the yet greater* Favour *and* Honour *of your Patronage, or at leaſt the* Benevolence *of your Pardon.*

Amongſt which, the Chief Deſign of ſome of them is to Aſſert the Rights and Conſtitutions of our Excellently Reformed Church, which of late we ſo often hear Reproached (in the modiſh Dialect of the Preſent Times) by the Name of Little Things; *and that in order to their being laid aſide, not onely as* Little, *but* Superfluous. *But for my own*

part, *I can account nothing* Little *in any Church, which has the ſtamp of undoubted Authority, and the Practice of Primitive Antiquity, as well as the Reaſon and Decency of the Thing it ſelf, to warrant and ſupport it. Though, if the ſuppoſed* Littleneſs *of theſe matters ſhould be a ſufficient Reaſon for the laying them aſide, I fear, our Church will be found to have more* Little Men *to ſpare, than* Little Things.

But I have obſerved all along, that while this Innovating *Spirit has been ſtriking at the* Conſtitutions *of our Church, the ſame has bin giving ſeveral Bold, and Scurvy ſtrokes at ſome of Her* Articles *too: An Evident Demonſtration to me, that whenſoever Her* Diſcipline *ſhall be deſtroyed, Her* Doctrine *will not long ſurvive it: And I doubt not but it is for the ſake of This, that the former is ſo much maligned and ſhot at.* Pelagianiſm *and* Socinianiſm, *with ſeveral other Heterodoxies Cognate to, and Dependent upon them, which of late with ſo much Confidence and Scandalous* Countenance, *walk about daring the World, are certainly no Doctrines of the Church of* England. *And none*

none are abler and fitter to make them appear what they are, and whither they tend, than our Excellent, and ſo well ſtocked Univerſities; and if theſe will but beſtirr themſelves againſt all Innovators whatſoever, it will quickly be ſeen, that our Church needs none either to fill Her Places, or to defend Her Doctrines, but the Sons whom ſhe Her ſelf has brought forth and bred up. Her Charity is indeed Great to Others, and the Greater, for that ſhe is ſo well provided of all that can Contribute either to Her Strength or Ornament without them. The Altar receives, and protects ſuch as fly to it, but needs them not.

We are not ſo Dull, but we perceive who are the Prime Deſigners, as well as the Profeſſed Actors againſt our Church, and from what Quarter the Blow chiefly threatens us. We know the Spring as well as we obſerve the Motion and Scent the Foot which purſues, as well as ſee the Hand which is lifted up againſt us. The Pope is an Experienced Workman; He knows his Tools, and knows them to be but Tools, and knows withall how to uſe them, and that ſo, that they ſhall

neither know who it is that uſes them, or what he uſes them for; and we cannot in reaſon preſume his Skill now in Ninety-three, *to be at all leſs than it was in* Forty-one. *But God, who has even to a Miracle, protected the Church of* England *hitherto, againſt all the Power and Spight both of her open and concealed Enemies, will, we hope, continue to protect ſo Pure and Rational, ſo Innocent, and Self-denying a Conſtitution ſtill. And next, under God, we muſt rely upon the Old Church of* England-Clergy, *together with the* Two Univerſities, *both to Support and Recover Her declining ſtate. For ſo long as the* Univerſities *are Sound, and Orthodox, the Church has* both Her Eyes open; *and while ſhe has ſo, 'tis to be hoped, that ſhe will* look about Her; *and conſider again and again, what ſhe is to* change from, *and what ſhe muſt* change to, *and where ſhe ſhall* make an End of Changing, *before ſhe quits her Preſent Conſtitution.*

Innovations *about Religion are certainly the moſt Efficacious, as well as the moſt Plauſible way of compaſſing a Total Abolition of it. One of the beſt and ſtrongeſt Arguments,*

we

we have againſt Popery, is, That it is an Innovation *upon the Chriſtian Church; and if ſo, I cannot ſee why that, which we explode in the* Popiſh Church, *ſhould paſs for ſuch a piece of Perfection in a* Reformed One. *The Papiſts, I am ſure, (our ſhrewdeſt and moſt deſigning Enemies) deſire and puſh on This to their utmoſt; and for that very Reaſon, one would think, that we (if we are not beſotted) ſhould oppoſe it* to our Utmoſt *too. However, let us but have our* Liturgy *continued to us, as it is, till the Perſons are born, who ſhall be able* to mend *it, or make a* Better, *and we deſire no greater ſecurity againſt either the* altering This, *or* introducing Another.

The Truth is, ſuch as would new model the Church of England, *ought not onely to have a New* Religion *(which ſome have been ſo long driving at) but a* New Reaſon *likewiſe, to proceed by: Since* Experience *(which was ever yet accounted one of the ſureſt and beſt Improvements of Reaſon) has been always for acquieſcing in Things ſettled with ſober, and mature Advice, (and, in the preſent caſe alſo, with the very Blood*

and Martyrdom of the Adviſers *themſelves*) *without running the Riſque of New* Experiments; *which, though in Philoſophy they may be commendable, yet in Religion and Religious Matters are generally fatal and pernicious. The Church is a* Royal Society *for ſettling* Old Things, *and not for finding out* New. *In a word, we ſerve a* Wiſe, *and* Unchangeable *God, and we deſire to do it, by a Religion, and in a Church* (*as like Him, as may be*) *without* Changes, *or* Alterations.

And now, as in ſo Important a Matter, I would Intereſt both Univerſities, ſo I do it with the ſame Honour and Deference to Both; as abhorring from my Heart the Pedantick Partiality of preferring one before the other: Since (*if my Relation to One ſhould never ſo much encline me ſo to do*) *I muſt ſincerely declare, that I cannot ſee how to place a* Preference, *where I can find no* Preheminence. *And therefore, as they are both Equal in Fame, and Learning, and all that is Great and Excellent, ſo I hope to ſee them always one in Judgment and Deſign, Heart and Affection; without any Strife,*

Emula-

Emulation, or Conteſt between them except this One (which I wiſh may be perpetual,) viz. *Which of the* Two beſt Univerſities in the World, *ſhall be moſt ſerviceable to the* Beſt Church in the World, *by their Learning, Conſtancy, and Integrity.*

But to Conclude, There remains no more for me to doe, but to beg Pardon of that Auguſt Body, to which I belong, if I have offended in aſſuming to my ſelf the Honour of mentioning my Relation to a Society, which I could never reflect the leaſt Honour upon, nor contribute the leaſt Advantage to.

All that I can add, is, That as it was my Fortune to ſerve this Noble Seat of Learning for many years, as Her Publick, *though Unworthy* Orator; *ſo upon that, and innumerable other Accounts, I ought for ever to be, and to acknowledge my ſelf,*

Her moſt Faithfull, Obedient,

and Devoted Servant,

Weſtminſter Abbey,
Novemb. 17. 1693.

Robert South.

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THE

The Practice of Religion enforced by Reaſon:

IN A

SERMON

Preached upon *Prov.* X. 9. at *Weſtminſter-Abbey*, 1667.

PROV. X. 9.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh ſurely.

AS it were eaſy to Evince, both from Reaſon and Experience, that there is a ſtrange, reſtleſs Activity in the Soul of Man, continually diſpoſing it to Operate, and Exert its Faculties; ſo the Phraſe of Scripture ſtill expreſſes the Life of Man by *Walking*; that is, it repreſents an Active Principle in an Active

Poſture. And, becauſe the Nature of Man carries him thus out to Action, it is no wonder if the ſame Nature equally renders him ſollicitous about the Iſſue and Event of his Actions: For every one, by reflecting upon the Way, and Method of his own Workings, will find that he is ſtill determined in them by a reſpect to the Conſequence of what he does; always proceeding upon this Argumentation; *If I do ſuch a thing, ſuch an Advantage will follow from it, and therefore I will do it. And if I do this, ſuch a Miſchief will enſue thereupon, and therefore I will forbear.* Every one, I ſay, is Concluded by this Practical diſcourſe; and for a man to bring his Actions to the Event propoſed, and deſigned by him, is *to walk ſurely.* But ſince the Event of an Action uſually follows the Nature or Quality of it, and the Quality follows the Rule directing it, it concerns a Man, by all means, in the framing of his Actions, not to be deceived in the Rule which He propoſes for the meaſure of them; which, without great and exact Caution, he may be theſe Two ways.

1. By

1. By laying falſe and deceitfull Principles.

2. In caſe he lays right Principles, yet by miſtaking in the Conſequences which he draws from them.

An Error in either of which, is equally dangerous; for if a Man is to draw a Line, it is all one whether he does it by a crooked Rule, or by a ſtraight One miſapplied. He who fixes upon falſe Principles, treads upon Infirm ground, and ſo ſinks; and He who fails in his Deductions from right Principles, ſtumbles upon Firm ground, and ſo falls; the diſaſter is not of the ſame Kind, but of the ſame Miſchief in both.

It muſt be confeſſed, that it is ſometimes very hard to judge of the Truth or Goodneſs of Principles, conſidered barely in themſelves, and abſtracted from their Conſequences. But certainly he acts upon the ſureſt and moſt Prudential grounds in the World, who, whether the Principles which he acts upon, prove true or falſe, yet ſecures an happy Iſſue to his Actions.

Now, He who guides his Actions by

the Rules of Piety and Religion, lays theſe Two Principles as the great Ground of all that He does.

1. That there is an Infinite, Eternal, All-wiſe Mind governing the Affairs of the World, and taking ſuch an Account of the Actions of men, as, according to the Quality of them, to puniſh or reward them.

2*ly*. That there is an Eſtate of Happineſs or Miſery after this Life, allotted to Every man, according to the Quality of his Actions here. Theſe, I ſay, are the Principles which every Religious man propoſes to Himſelf; And the Deduction which He makes from them, is This: That it is his Grand Intereſt, and Concern, ſo to act and behave Himſelf in This World, as to ſecure Himſelf from an Eſtate of Miſery in the Other. And thus to act, is, in the Phraſe of Scripture, *to walk uprightly*; and it is my buſineſs to prove, That He who acts in the ſtrength of this Concluſion, drawn from the Two fore-mentioned Principles, *walks ſurely*, or ſecures an happy Event to his Actions,

ons, againſt all Contingencies whatſoever.

And to demonſtrate this, I ſhall Conſider the ſaid Principles under a Threefold Suppoſition,

1. As Certainly True;
2*ly*. As Probable; And,
3*ly*. As Falſe.

And if the Pious man brings his Actions to an happy End, which ſoever of theſe Suppoſitions his Principles fall under, then certainly, there is none who *walks ſo ſurely*, and upon ſuch Irrefragable grounds of Prudence, as He, who is Religious.

1. Firſt of all therefore we will take theſe Principles (as we may very well doe) under the Hypotheſis of *Certainly true:* Where, though the method of the Ratiocination which I have caſt the preſent diſcourſe into, does not naturally engage me to *prove them ſo*, but onely to ſhew what directly and neceſſarily follows upon a ſuppoſal *that they are ſo*; yet to give the greater Perſpicuity and Clear-

neſs to the Proſecution of the ſubject in hand, I ſhall briefly demonſtrate them thus.

It is neceſſary, That there ſhould be ſome Firſt Mover; and, if ſo, a Firſt Being; And the Firſt Being muſt inferr an Infinite, unlimited Perfection in the ſaid Being: For as much as if it were Finite or Limited, that Limitation muſt have been either from it ſelf, or from ſomething elſe. But not from it ſelf, ſince it is contrary to Reaſon and Nature, that any Being ſhould Limit its own Perfection; nor yet from ſomething elſe, ſince then it ſhould not have been *the Firſt*, as ſuppoſing ſome Other Thing Coevous to it; which is againſt the preſent Suppoſition. So that it being clear, That there muſt be a *Firſt Being*, and that infinitely Perfect, it will follow, that all other Perfection that is, muſt be derived from it; and ſo we inferr the Creation of the World: And then ſuppoſing the World created by God, (ſince it is no ways reconcileable to God's Wiſdom, that He ſhould not alſo govern it) Creation

muſt

muſt needs inferr Providence: And then, it being granted, that God governs the World; it will follow alſo, that He does it by means ſuteable to the Natures of the Things He Governs, and to the Attainment of the proper Ends of Government: And moreover, Man being by Nature a free, moral Agent, and ſo, capable of deviating from his Duty, as well as performing it, it is neceſſary that He ſhould be governed by Laws: And ſince Laws require that they be enforced with the Sanction of Rewards and Puniſhments, ſufficient to ſway and work upon the Minds of ſuch as are to be governed by them, and laſtly, ſince Experience ſhews that Rewards and Puniſhments, terminated only within this Life, are not ſufficient for that Purpoſe, it fairly and rationally follows, That the Rewards and Puniſhments, which God governs Mankind by, do, and muſt, look beyond it.

And thus I have given a brief Proof of the Certainty of theſe Principles; namely, *That there is a ſupreme Governour of the World*; and *that there is a future eſtate of*

happineſs or miſery for Men after this Life: Which Principles, while a man ſteers his Courſe by, if He acts piouſly, ſoberly, and temperately, I ſuppoſe there needs no further Arguments to Evince, that He acts prudentially and ſafely. For he acts as under the eye of his juſt and ſevere Judge, who reaches to his Creature a Command with One Hand, and a Reward with the Other. He ſpends as a Perſon, who knows that He muſt come to a Reckoning. He ſees an Eternal Happineſs or Miſery, ſuſpended upon a few days behaviour; and therefore He lives every hour as for Eternity. His future condition has ſuch a powerfull Influence upon his preſent Practice, becauſe he entertains a continual Apprehenſion, and a firm Perſwaſion of it. If a man walks over a narrow Bridge, when he is drunk, it is no wonder that he forgets his Caution, while he over-looks his Danger. But He who is ſober, and views that nice Separation between Himſelf and the Devouring Deep, ſo that if he ſhould ſlip, he ſees his Grave gaping under Him, ſurely muſt needs take

take every ſtep with Horror, and the utmoſt Caution and Sollicitude.

But, for a man to believe it as the moſt undoubted Certainty in the World, that He ſhall be judged according to the Quality of his Actions here, and after Judgment receive an Eternal Recompence, and yet to take his full ſwing in all the Pleaſures of Sin, is it not a greater Phrenzy, than, for a man to take a Purſe at *Tyburn*, while he is actually ſeeing another Hanged for the ſame Fact? It is really to dare and defy the Juſtice of Heaven, to laugh at *the right-aiming Thunder-bolts*, to puff at Damnation; and, in a word, to bid Omnipotence *do its worſt*. He indeed, who thus walks, *walks ſurely*; but it is, becauſe he is *ſure* to be damned.

I confeſs it is hard to reconcile ſuch a ſtupid Courſe to the natural way of the Soul's acting; according to which, the Will moves according to the Propoſals of *Good* and *Evil*, made by the Underſtanding: And therefore for a man to run head-long into the Bottomleſs Pit, while the Eye of a Seeing Conſcience aſſures him,

him, that it is Bottomleſs and Open, and all Return from it Deſperate and Impoſſible; while His Ruin ſtares him in the Face, and the Sword of Vengeance points directly at his Heart, ſtill to preſs on to the Embraces of His Sin, is a Problem unreſolvable upon any other Ground, but that Sin infatuates before it deſtroys. For *Judas*, to receive and ſwallow the Sop, when His Maſter gave it him ſeaſoned with thoſe terrible words, *It had been good for that man that He had never been born.* Surely this Argued a furious Appetite, and a ſtrong Stomach, that could thus catch at a Morſel, with the Fire and Brimſtone all flaming about it, and (as it were) digeſt Death it ſelf, and make a meal upon Perdition.

I could wiſh that every bold Sinner, when he is about to engage in the Commiſſion of any known Sin, would arreſt his Confidence, and for a while ſtop the Execution of his Purpoſe, with this ſhort Queſtion; *Doe I believe that it is really true, that God has denounced Death to ſuch a Practice, or doe I not?* If he does not; let him renounce

renounce his Chriſtianity, and ſurrender back his Baptiſm, the Water of which might better ſerve Him to cool his Tongue in Hell, than onely to Conſign Him over to the Capacities of ſo black an Apoſtacy. But if he does believe it, how will he acquit Himſelf upon the Accounts of bare Reaſon? For, does he think, that if he purſues the means of Death, they will not bring Him to that Fatal End? Or does He think that He can grapple with Divine Vengeance, and endure the *Everlaſting Burnings*, or arm himſelf againſt the Bites of the Never-dying Worm? No ſurely, theſe are things not to be Imagined; and therefore I cannot conceive what ſecurity the preſuming Sinner can promiſe Himſelf, but upon theſe Two following Accounts.

1. That God is mercifull, and will not be ſo ſevere as *his word*; and that *his Threatnings of Eternal Torments are not ſo Decretory and Abſolute, but that there is a very Comfortable* latitude *left in them for* Men of Skill *to creep out at.* And, here it muſt indeed be confeſſed, that *Origen*, and ſome

ſome others, not long ſince, who have been ſo officious as to furbiſh up, and reprint his old Errors, hold, That the Sufferings of the Damned are not to be, in a ſtrict ſenſe, *Eternal*; but that, after a Certain Revolution, and Period of Time, there ſhall *be a General Gaol-delivery of the Souls in Priſon*, and that not for a *farther Execution*, but a *final Releaſe*. And it muſt be further acknowledged, that ſome of the Ancients, like kind-hearted Men, have talked much of Annual *Refrigeriums*, Reſpites, or Intervals of Puniſhment to the Damned, as particularly on the Great Feſtivals of the *Reſurrection*, *Aſcenſion*, *Pentecoſt*, and the like. In which, as theſe good Men are more to be commended for their Kindneſs and Compaſſion, than to be followed in their Opinion; (which may be much better Argued by *Wiſhes* than *Demonſtrations*;) ſo, admitting that it were true, yet what a pitifull, ſlender Comfort would this amount to? Much like the *Jews* abating the Puniſhment of Malefactors from *forty ſtripes*, to *forty ſave one*. A great Indulgence indeed, even as great

great as the difference between *Forty* and *Thirty-nine*; and yet much leſs conſiderable would that Indulgence be, of a few Holy-days in the meaſures of Eternity, of ſome Hours Eaſe, compared with Infinite Ages of Torment.

Suppoſing therefore, that few Sinners relieve themſelves with ſuch groundleſs, trifling Conſiderations as theſe, yet may they not however faſten a Rational Hope upon the Boundleſs Mercy of God, that this may induce him to ſpare his poor Creature, though by Sin become obnoxious to His Wrath? To this I anſwer, That the Divine Mercy is indeed large, and far ſurpaſſing all Created meaſures, yet nevertheleſs it has its proper time; and after this Life it is the time of Juſtice; and to hope for the Favours of Mercy then, is to expect an Harveſt in the Dead of Winter. God has caſt all his Works into a certain, inviolable Order; according to which, there is a Time to Pardon, and a Time to Puniſh; and the Time of One, is not the Time of the Other. When Corn has once felt the Sickle, it has no more

more Benefit from the Sun-ſhine. But,

2*ly*. If the Conſcience be too apprehenſive (as for the moſt part it is) to venture the Final iſſue of Things, upon a Fond perſwaſion, that the Great Judge of the World will relent, and not execute the Sentence pronounced by him; *As if he had threatned Men with Hell, rather to fright them from Sin, than with an Intent to puniſh them for it*; I ſay, if the Conſcience cannot find any Satisfaction or Support from ſuch Reaſonings as theſe, yet may it not, at leaſt, relieve it ſelf with the Purpoſes of a future Repentance, notwithſtanding its preſent, actual Violations of the Law? I anſwer, That this certainly is a Confidence of all others, the moſt ungrounded and irrational. For upon what Ground can a man promiſe Himſelf a Future Repentance, who cannot promiſe Himſelf a Futurity? Whoſe Life depends upon His Breath, and is ſo reſtrained to the preſent, that it cannot ſecure to it ſelf the Reverſion of the very next Minute. Have not many died with the guilt of Impenitence, and the deſigns of Repen-

tance

tance together? If a man dies to day, by the prevalence of ſome ill humours, will it availHim that he intended to have bled and purged to morrow?

But how dares ſinfull Duſt and Aſhes invade the Prerogative of Providence,and Carve out to Himſelf the Seaſons and Iſſues of Life and Death, which the *Father* keeps wholly *within his own Power*? How does that man, who thinks he ſins ſecurely, under the ſhelter of ſome Remote purpoſes of Amendment, know, but that the Decree above may be already paſſed againſt Him,and his Allowance of Mercy ſpent; ſo that the *Bow in the Clouds* is now drawn, and the Arrow levelled at his Head; and not many Days like to paſs, but perhaps an Apoplex, or an Impoſtem,or ſome ſuddain Diſaſter may ſtop his Breath, and reap him down as a Sinner ripe for Deſtruction?

I conclude therefore, That, upon Suppoſition of the *Certain Truth* of the Principles of Religion; He, who *walks not uprightly*, has neither from the Preſumption of *God's Mercy Reverſing the Decree of his Juſtice*,

Juſtice, nor from his own *Purpoſes of a Future Repentance*, any ſure ground to ſet his Foot upon; but in this whole Courſe Acts as directly in Contradiction to Nature, as he does in defiance of Grace. In a word, He is beſotted, and has loſt his Reaſon; and what then can there be for Religion to take hold of Him by? Come we now to the

2d. Suppoſition; under which, we ſhew, That the Principles of Religion, laid down by us, might be Conſidered; and that is, as *onely Probable*. Where we muſt obſerve, That *Probability* does not properly make any Alteration, either in the *Truth* or *Falſity* of Things; but onely Imports a different Degree of their Clearneſs, or Appearance to the Underſtanding. So that that is to be accounted *Probable*, which has more and better Arguments producible for it, than can be brought againſt it; and ſurely ſuch a thing, at leaſt, is Religion. For certain it is, that Religion is Univerſal, I mean *the firſt Rudiments and General Notions of Religion, called Natural Religion, and conſiſting*

ſiſting in the acknowledgment of a Deity, and of the common Principles of Morality, and a future Eſtate of Souls after Death, (in which alſo we have all that ſome *Reformers* and *Refiners* amongſt us, would reduce Chriſtianity it ſelf to.) This Notion of Religion I ſay, has diffuſed it ſelf in ſome degree or other, greater or leſs, as far as human Nature extends. So that there is no Nation in the World, though plunged into never ſuch groſs and abſurd Idolatry, but has ſome awfull Sence of a Deity, and a perſwaſion of a State of Retribution to Men after this Life.

But now, if there are really no ſuch Things, but all is a meer Lye, and a Fable, contrived only to chain up the Liberty of Man's Nature from a freer Enjoyment of thoſe things, which otherwiſe it would have as full a right to Enjoy, as to Breath, I demand whence this perſwaſion could thus come to be Univerſal? For was it ever known, in any other Inſtance, that the whole World was brought to Conſpire in the belief of a Lye? Nay, and of ſuch a Lye, as ſhould lay upon

Men ſuch unpleaſing Abridgments, tying them up from a full Gratification of thoſe Luſts and Appetites, which they ſo impatiently deſire to ſatisfie, and conſequently, by all means, to remove thoſe impediments that might any way obſtruct their ſatisfaction? Since therefore it cannot be made out, upon any Principle of Reaſon, how all the Nations in the World, otherwiſe ſo diſtant in Situation, Manners, Intereſts, and Inclinations, ſhould by Deſign or Combination, meet in one perſwaſion; and withall, that Men, who ſo mortally hate to be deceived, and impoſed upon, ſhould yet ſuffer themſelves to be deceived by ſuch a perſwaſion as is falſe; and not onely falſe, but alſo croſs, and contrary to their ſtrongeſt Deſires; ſo that if it were falſe, they would ſet the utmoſt force of their Reaſon on work to diſcover that Falſity, and thereby diſenthrall themſelves; And further, ſince there is nothing falſe, but what may be proved to be ſo: And yet, Laſtly, ſince all the Power and Induſtry of Man's mind has not been hitherto

therto able to prove a Falſity in the Principles of Religion, it Irrefragably follows (and that, I ſuppoſe, without gathering any more into the Concluſion, than has been made good in the Premiſes) that Religion is, at leaſt, a very high *Probability*.

And this is that which I here contend for, That it is not neceſſary to the obliging Men to believe Religion to be true, that this Truth be made out to their Reaſon, by Arguments demonſtratively certain; but that it is ſufficient to render their Unbelief unexcuſable, even upon the account of bare Reaſon, if ſo be the Truth of Religion carry in it a much greater Probability, than any of thoſe Ratiocinations that pretend the Contrary: And this I prove in the ſtrength of theſe two Conſiderations.

1ſt. That no man, in matters of this Life, requires an Aſſurance either of the Good, which He deſigns, or of the Evil, which He avoids, from Arguments demonſtratively certain; but judges Himſelf to have ſufficient ground to act upon,

from a probable perſwaſion of the Event of things. No man who firſt Trafficks into a Foreign Countrey, has any Scientifick Evidence, that there is ſuch a Countrey, but by Report, which can produce no more than a moral Certainty; that is, a very high *probability*, and ſuch as there can be no Reaſon to except againſt. He who has a probable Belief, that He ſhall meet with Thieves in ſuch a Road, thinks himſelf to have Reaſon enough to decline it, albeit he is ſure to ſuſtain ſome leſs (though yet conſiderable) Inconvenience by his ſo doing. But perhaps it may be replied, (and it is all that can be replied) That a greater *Aſſurance* and *Evidence* is required of the Things and Concerns of the other World, than of the Intereſts of this. To which I Anſwer, That *Aſſurance* and *Evidence* (Terms, by the way, Extremely different; the firſt, reſpecting properly the *Ground* of our Aſſenting to a Thing; and the other, the *Clearneſs* of the Thing, or *Object* aſſented to) have no place at all here, as being contrary to our preſent *Suppoſition*;

Suppoſition; according to which, we are now treating of the Practical Principles of Religion onely as *Probable*, and falling under a *Probable Perſwaſion*. And for this, I affirm, That where the Caſe is about the Hazarding an Eternal, or a Temporal Concern, there a leſs degree of Probability ought to engage our Caution againſt the loſs of the Former, than is neceſſary to engage it about preventing the loſs of the Latter. Foraſmuch, as where Things are leaſt to be put to the venture, as the Eternal Intereſts of the other World ought to be; there every, even the leaſt, Probability, or likelihood of Danger, ſhould be provided againſt; but where the loſs can be but Temporal, every ſmall Probability of it, need not put us ſo Anxiouſly to prevent it, ſince, though it ſhould happen, the loſs might be repaired again; or, if not, could not however deſtroy us, by reaching us in our greateſt and higheſt Concern; which no Temporal Thing whatſoever is, or can be. And this directly introduces the

2d. Conſideration or Argument, *viz.* That bare Reaſon, diſcourſing upon a Principle of Self-preſervation (which ſurely is the Fundamental Principle which Nature proceeds by) will oblige a man Voluntarily, and by Choice, to undergo any leſs Evil to ſecure Himſelf but from the Probability of an Evil incomparably greater, and that alſo, ſuch an one, as, if that Probability paſſes into a certain Event, admits of no Reparation by any After-remedy that can be applied to it.

Now, that Religion teaching a future Eſtate of Souls, is a Probability; and that its Contrary cannot with Equal Probability be proved, we have already Evinced. This therefore being ſuppoſed, we will ſuppoſe yet further, That for a man to Abridge Himſelf in the full ſatisfaction of His Appetites, and Inclinations, is *an Evil*, becauſe a preſent Pain and Trouble: But then it muſt likewiſe be granted, that Nature muſt needs abhorr a State of Eternal Pain and Miſery much more; and that if a man does not undergo the former leſs Evil, it is highly probable

probable that ſuch an Eternal eſtate of Miſery will be his Portion; And if ſo, I would fain know whether that man takes a Rational Courſe to preſerve Himſelf, who Refuſes the Endurance of theſe Leſſer Troubles, to ſecure Himſelf from a Condition infinitely and inconceivably more Miſerable.

But ſince Probability, in the Nature of it, ſuppoſes that a Thing *may*, or *may not* be ſo, for any thing that yet appears, or is certainly determined on either ſide, we will here conſider both ſides of this Probability: As,

1ſt. That, it is one way poſſible, That there may be no ſuch Thing as a future eſtate of happineſs, or miſery, for thoſe who have lived well or ill here; And then he, who upon the ſtrength of a Contrary belief, abridged himſelf in the gratification of his Appetites, ſuſtains only this Evil; *viz.* That he did not pleaſe his Senſes, and unbounded Deſires, ſo much as otherwiſe he might, and would have done, had he not lived under the Captivity and Check of ſuch a Belief. This

is the Utmoſt which he ſuffers: But whether this be a Real Evil or no (whatſoever Vulgar minds may commonly think it) ſhall be diſcourſed of afterwards.

2. But then again, on the other ſide, 'tis *Probable* that there will be ſuch a future eſtate; and then, how miſerably is the voluptuous, ſenſual Unbeliever, left in the Lurch? For there can be no Retreat for him then, no mending of his Choice in the other World, no After-game to be played in Hell. It fares with Men, in reference to their future Eſtate, and the Condition upon which they muſt paſs to it, much as it does with a Merchant, having a Veſſel richly fraught at Sea in a Storm: the Storm grows higher and higher, and threatens the utter loſs of the Ship: But there is one, and but one Certain way to ſave it, which is, by throwing its Rich Lading over-board; Yet ſtill, for all this, the man knows not but *poſſibly* the Storm may ceaſe, and ſo all be preſerved. However, in the mean time, there is little or no Probability that it will doe ſo; and in caſe it ſhould not,

not, he is then assured, that he must lay his Life, as well as his Rich Commodities in the Cruel Deep. Now, in this Case, would this man, think we, act rationally, should he, upon the slender *Possibility* of Escaping otherwise, neglect the sure, infallible Preservation of his Life, by casting away his Rich Goods? No certainly, it would be so far from it, that should the Storm, by a strange hap, cease immediately after he had thus thrown away his Riches; yet the Throwing them away, was infinitely more Rational and Eligible, than the Retaining or Keeping them could have been.

For a man, while He lives here in the World, to doubt whether there be any Hell or no; and thereupon to Live so, as if absolutely there were none; but when he dies, to find himself Confuted in the Flames, This, surely, must be the height of Woe and Disappointment, and a bitter Conviction of an irrational Venture, and an absurd Choice. In doubtfull Cases, Reason still determines for the safer side; Especially if the Case be not onely Doubtfull,

full, but alſo highly Concerning, and the Venture be of a Soul, and an Eternity.

He who ſat at a Table, richly and deliciouſly furniſhed, but with a Sword hanging over his Head by one ſingle Thread or Hair, ſurely had enough to check his Appetite, even againſt all the Ragings of Hunger, and Temptations of Senſuality. The onely Argument that could any way encourage his Appetite, was, That *poſſibly the Sword might not fall*, but when his Reaſon ſhould encounter it with another Queſtion, *What if it ſhould fall?* And moreover, that pitifull Stay by which it hung, ſhould oppoſe the *likelihood that it would*, to a meer *poſſibility that it might not*; what could the man enjoy or taſt of his rich Banquet, with all this doubt and horror working in his Mind?

Though a Man's condition ſhould be really in it ſelf never *ſo ſafe*, yet an apprehenſion and ſurmiſe that it is *not ſafe*, is enough to make a quick and a tender Reaſon ſufficiently miſerable. Let the moſt Acute, and Learned Unbeliever, demonſtrate that there is no Hell: And

if

if he can, he Sins ſo much the more rationally; otherwiſe, if he cannot, the Caſe remains doubtfull at leaſt: But he who Sins obſtinately, does not act as if it were ſo much as doubtfull; for if it were Certain and Evident to Senſe, he could do no more; but for a man to found a confident Practice upon a diſputable Principle, is brutiſhly to out-run his Reaſon, and to build ten times wider than his Foundation. In a word, I look upon this one ſhort Conſideration (were there no more) as a ſufficient Ground for any Rational Man to take up his Religion upon, and which I defy the ſubtleſt Atheiſt in the World ſolidly to anſwer, or confute; Namely, *That it is good to be ſure.* And ſo I proceed to the

Third and Laſt Suppoſition; Under which, the Principles of Religion may (for Argument ſake) be conſidered; and that is, *as Falſe*; which ſurely muſt reach the utmoſt Thoughts of any Atheiſt whatſoever. Nevertheleſs, even upon this account alſo, I doubt not but to Evince, That he who *walks uprightly*, *walks* much more

more *ſurely*, than the wicked and profane Liver; and that with reference to the moſt Valued Temporal Enjoyments, ſuch as are, *Reputation*, *Quietneſs*, *Health*, and the like, which are the greateſt which this Life affords, or is deſireable for. And,

1ſt. For *Reputation* or *Credit*. Is any one had in greater Eſteem than the Juſt Perſon; who has given the World an Aſſurance, by the conſtant tenour of his Practice, That he makes a Conſcience of his ways; That he ſcorns to doe an unworthy, or a baſe Thing; to lye, to defraud, to undermine another's Intereſt, by any ſiniſter and inferiour Arts? And is there any thing, which reflects a greater Luſtre upon a Man's Perſon, than a ſevere Temperance, and a Reſtraint of Himſelf, from vitious and unlawfull Pleaſures? Does any thing ſhine ſo bright as Vertue, and that even in the Eyes of thoſe who are void of it? For hardly ſhall you find any one ſo bad, but he deſires the Credit of *being Thought*, what his Vice will not let *him be*; ſo great a Pleaſure,

Pleaſure, and Convenience is it, to live with Honour, and a fair Acceptance, amongſt thoſe whom we converſe with; And a Being without it, is not *Life*, but rather the *Skeleton* or *Caput mortuum* of *Life*; like Time without Day, or Day it ſelf without the ſhining of the Sun to enliven it.

On the other ſide, Is there any thing that more embitters all the Enjoyments of this Life, than Shame and Reproach? Yet this is generally the Lot and Portion of the Impious and Irreligious; and of ſome of them more eſpecially.

For how Infamous, in the firſt place, is the falſe, fraudulent and unconſcionable Perſon? and how quickly is his Character known? For hardly ever did any man of *no Conſcience* continue a man of *any Credit* long. Likewiſe, how *Odious*, as well as Infamous, is ſuch an One? Eſpecially, if he be arrived at that Conſummate, and Robuſt degree of Falſhood, as to play in and out, and ſhew Tricks with *Oaths*, the ſacredeſt Bonds which the Conſcience of Man can be bound with; how

how is ſuch an One ſhunn'd and dreaded, like a walking Peſt? What Volleys of Scoffs, Curſes, and Satyrs, are diſcharged at Him? So that let never ſo much Honour be placed upon Him, it cleaves not to Him, but forthwith ceaſes to be *Honour*, by being ſo *placed*; No Preferment can ſweeten Him, but the higher he ſtands, the farther and wider he ſtinks.

In like manner, for the *Drinker*, and *debauched* Perſon: Is any thing more the object of Scorn and Contempt, than ſuch an One? His Company is juſtly look'd upon as a diſgrace; and no Body can own a Friendſhip for him, without being an Enemy to himſelf. A Drunkard is (as it were) Out-law'd from all worthy and creditable Converſe. Men abhorr, loath, and deſpiſe him, and would even ſpit at him as they meet him, were it not for fear that a ſtomach ſo charged, ſhould *ſomething more* than ſpit at them again.

But not to go over all the ſeveral Kinds of Vice and Wickedneſs, ſhould we ſet aſide the Conſideration of the *Glories* of a better World, and allow this Life for

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the Onely Place and Scene of Man's happineſs; yet ſurely *Cato* will be always more Honourable than *Clodius*, and *Cicero* than *Catiline*. Fidelity, Juſtice, and Temperance, will always draw their own Reward after them, or rather carry it with them, in thoſe marks of Honour which they fix upon the Perſons who practiſe and purſue them. It is ſaid of *David*, in 1 *Chron.* 29. 28. *That he died full of Days, Riches, and Honour*; and there was no need of an Heaven, to render him in all reſpects a much *happier* man than *Saul*. But in the

2^d. Place, The Vertuous and Religious Perſon walks upon *ſurer Grounds*, than the Vicious and Irreligious, in reſpect of the *Eaſe*, *Peace*, and *Quietneſs*, which he enjoys in this World; and which certainly make no ſmall part of Human felicity. For Anxiety and Labour are great Ingredients of that Curſe, which Sin has intail'd upon Fal'n man. Care and Toil came into the World with Sin, and remain ever ſince inſeparable from it, both as its Puniſhment, and Effect.

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The *ſervice* of Sin is *perfect ſlavery*; and he who will pay Obedience to the Commands of it, ſhall find it an Unreaſonable Task-maſter, and an Unmeaſurable Exactor.

And to repreſent the Caſe in ſome Particulars. The Ambitious Perſon muſt riſe early, and ſit up late, and purſue his Deſign with a conſtant, indefatigable Attendance; he muſt be infinitely patient and ſervile, and obnoxious to all the croſs Humours of thoſe whom he expects to riſe by; he muſt endure and digeſt all ſorts of Affronts; Adore the Foot that Kicks him, and Kiſs the Hand that ſtrikes him: While, in the mean time, the Humble and Contented Man is vertuous at a much eaſier rate: His Vertue bids him ſleep, and take his reſt, while the others reſtleſs Sin bids him ſit up and watch. He pleaſes himſelf innocently and eaſily, while the Ambitious man attempts to pleaſe others ſinfully, and difficultly, and perhaps, in the Iſſue, unſucceſsfully too.

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The Robber, and Man of Rapine, muſt run, and ride, and uſe all the dangerous, and even deſperate Ways of eſcape; and probably, after all, his Sin betrays him to a Gaol, and from thence advances him to the Gibbet: But let him carry off his Booty with as much ſafety and ſucceſs as he can wiſh, yet the Innocent Perſon, with never ſo little of his own, envies him not, and, if he has nothing, fears him not.

Likewiſe the cheat, and fraudulent Perſon, is put to a Thouſand ſhifts to palliate his Fraud, and to be thought an honeſt Man: But ſurely there can be no greater Labour, than to be always diſſembling, and forced to maintain a conſtant diſguiſe, there being ſo many ways by which a ſmothered Truth is apt to blaze, and break out; the very Nature of Things, making it not more Natural for them *to be*, than to appear *as they be*. But he, who will be really honeſt, juſt, and ſincere in his Dealings, needs take no pains to be thought ſo; no more than the Sun needs take any pains to ſhine,

or, when he is up, to convince the World that it is Day.

And here again, to bring in the Man of Luxury and Intemperance for his ſhare in the Pain and Trouble, as well as in the fore-mentioned Shame and Infamy of his Vice. Can any Toil, or Day-labour, equal the Fatigue, or Drudgery, which ſuch an one undergoes, while he is continually pouring in Draught after Draught, and cramming in Morſel after Morſel, and that in ſpight of Appetite and Nature, till he becomes a Burthen to the very Earth that bears him; though not ſo great an One to That, but that (if poſſible) he is yet a greater to Himſelf?

See the Firſt Vol. p. 27, and 28.

And now, in the laſt place, to mention one Sinner more, and him a notable, leading Sinner indeed, to wit, the *Rebel*. Can any thing have more of Trouble, Hazard, and Anxiety in it, than the Courſe which he takes? For, in the firſt place, all the Evils of War muſt unavoidably be endured, as the neceſſary Means and Inſtruments to compaſs, and give ſucceſs to his Traiterous

Traiterous deſigns. In which, if it is his Lot to be Conquered, he muſt expect that Vengeance that juſtly attends a conquered, diſarmed Villain; for when ſuch an one is vanquiſhed, *his Sins are always upon him.* But if, on the contrary, he proves Victorious, he will yet find Miſery enough in the diſtracting Cares of ſettling an ungrounded, odious, deteſtable Intereſt, ſo heartily, and ſo juſtly maligned, abhorred, and oftentimes plotted againſt; So that, in effect, he is ſtill in *War*, though he has quitted the *Field.* The Torment of his ſuſpicion is great, and the Courſes he muſt take to quiet his jealous, ſuſpicious Mind, infinitely troubleſome and vexatious.

But, in the mean time, the Labour of Obedience, Loyalty, and Subjection, is no more, but for a man honeſtly and diſcreetly to ſit ſtill, and to enjoy what he has, under the Protection of the Laws. And when ſuch an one is in his loweſt condition, he is yet high and happy enough to deſpiſe and pity the moſt proſperous *Rebel* in the World: Even thoſe

famous Ones of *Forty-one* (with all due Reſpect to their flouriſhing Relations be it ſpoke) not excepted. In the

Third and Laſt place, The Religious Perſon *walks upon ſurer* grounds than the Irreligious, in reſpect of the very *Health of his Body*. Vertue is a Friend, and an Help to Nature, but it is Vice and Luxury that deſtroys it, and the Diſeaſes of Intemperance are the natural product of the Sins of Intemperance. Whereas, on the other ſide, a temperate, innocent uſe of the Creature, never caſts any one into a Fever, or a Surfeit. Chaſtity makes no work for a Chirurgeon, nor ever ends in *rottenneſs of Bones*. Sin is the fruitfull Parent of Diſtempers, and *Ill Lives* occaſion *Good Phyſicians*. Seldom ſhall one ſee in Cities, Courts, and Rich Families (where Men live plentifully, and eat and drink freely) that perfect Health, that Athletick ſoundneſs and vigour of Conſtitution, which is commonly ſeen in the Countrey, in poor Houſes, and Cottages, where Nature is their Cook, and Neceſſity their Caterer, and where they have

no

no other Doctor, but the Sun and the freſh Air, and that ſuch an One, as never ſends them to the Apothecary. It has been obſerved in the earlier Ages of the Church, that none lived ſuch healthfull, and long Lives, as Monks and Hermits, who had ſequeſtred themſelves from the Pleaſures and Plenties of the World, to a conſtant Aſcetick Courſe, of the ſevereſt Abſtinence and Devotion.

Nor is Exceſs the onely Thing by which Sin mauls and breaks Men in their Health, and the comfortable Enjoyment of themſelves thereby, but many are alſo brought to a very ill and languiſhing Habit of Body, by meer Idleneſs; and Idleneſs is both it ſelf a great Sin, and the Cauſe of many more. The Husbandman returns from the Field, and from Manuring his Ground ſtrong and healthy, becauſe innocent and laborious; You will find *no Diet-drinks*, no *Boxes of Pills*, nor *Galley-pots*, amongſt his Proviſions; no, he neither *ſpeaks* nor *lives* French, he is not *ſo much a Gentleman* (forſooth.) His Meals are courſe and ſhort, his Employment

warrantable, his Sleep certain and refreſhing, neither interrupted with the Laſhes of a guilty Mind, nor the Aches of a crazy Body. And when Old Age comes upon him, it comes alone, bringing no other Evil with it but it ſelf: But when it comes to wait upon a great and worſhipfull Sinner (who for many years together has had the Reputation of *Eating well*, and *Doing ill*) it comes (as it ought to doe, to a Perſon of ſuch Quality) attended with a long Train and Retinue of Rheums, Coughs, Catarrhs, and Dropſies, together with many painfull Girds and Convulſions, which are at leaſt called *the Gout*. How does ſuch an one go about, or is carried rather, with his Body bending inward, his Head ſhaking, and his Eyes always watering (inſtead of *weeping*) for the Sins of his Ill-ſpent Youth. In a word, Old Age ſeizes upon ſuch a Perſon, like Fire upon a rotten Houſe; it was rotten before, and muſt have fal'n of it ſelf; ſo that it is no more but one Ruin preventing another.

And thus I have ſhewn the Fruits and Effects

Effects of Sin upon Men in this World. But peradventure it will be replied, That there are many Sinners who eſcape all theſe Calamities, and neither labour under any ſhame or diſrepute, any unquietneſs of Condition, or more than ordinary diſtemper of Body, but paſs their Days with as great a Portion of Honour, Eaſe, and Health, as any other Men whatſoever. But to this I Anſwer,

Firſt, That thoſe Sinners who are in ſuch a temporally happy Condition, owe it not to their Sins, but wholly to their Luck, and a benign Chance that they are ſo. Providence often diſpoſes of Things by a Method beſide, and above the diſcourſes of Man's Reaſon.

Secondly, That the Number of thoſe Sinners, who by their Sins have been directly plunged into all the fore-mentioned Evils, is incomparably greater than the Number of thoſe, who, by the ſingular favour of Providence, have eſcaped them. And,

Thirdly, and *Laſtly*, That, notwithſtanding all this, Sin has yet in it ſelf a

natural Tendency to bring Men under all theſe Evils; and, if perſiſted in, will infallibly end in them, unleſs hindred by ſome unuſual Accident or other, which no man, acting Rationally, can ſteadily build upon. It is not impoſſible, but a man may practice a Sin ſecretly, to his Dying-day; but it is Ten thouſand to One, if the Practice be conſtant, but that ſome time or other it will be diſcovered; and then the Effect of Sin diſcovered, muſt be Shame and Confuſion to the Sinner. It is poſſible alſo, that a man may be an old Healthfull Epicure; but I affirm alſo, that it is next to a Miracle, if he be ſo; and the like is to be ſaid of the ſeveral Inſtances of Sin, hitherto produced by us. In ſhort, nothing can ſtep between them and Miſery in this World, but a very great, ſtrange, and unuſual Chance, which none will preſume of, who *walks ſurely*.

And ſo, I ſuppoſe, That Religion cannot poſſibly be enforced (even in the judgment of its beſt Friends, and moſt profeſſed Enemies) by any further Arguments,

ments, than what have been produced, (how much better ſoever the ſaid Arguments may be managed by abler hands.) For I have ſhewn and proved, That whether the Principles of it be *Certain*, or but *Probable*, nay, though ſuppoſed abſolutely *Falſe*; yet a man is ſure of that happineſs in the *Practice*, which he cannot be in the *Neglect* of it; And conſequently, that though he were really a *Speculative Atheiſt*, (which there is great reaſon to believe, that none perfectly are,) yet if he would but proceed rationally, that is, if (according to his own meaſures of Reaſon) he would but *Love himſelf*, he could not however be a *Practical Atheiſt*; nor live *without God in this World*, whether or no he expected to be rewarded by him in *another*.

And now, to make ſome Application of the foregoing Diſcourſe, we may, by an eaſy, but ſure Deduction, conclude and gather from it theſe Two things:

Firſt, That that Profane, Atheiſtical, Epicurean Rabble, whom the whole Nation ſo rings of, and who have lived ſo much

much to the defiance of God, the dishonour of Mankind, and the disgrace of the Age which they are cast upon, are not indeed (what they are pleased to think and vote themselves) the *wisest Men in the World*; for in matters of Choice, no man can be *wise* in any Course or Practice, in which he is not *safe* too. But can these high Assumers, and Pretenders to Reason, prove themselves so, amidst all those *Liberties* and *Latitudes* of Practice which they take? Can they make it out against the common Sence and Opinion of all Mankind, that there is no such Thing as a future estate of misery for such as have lived ill here? Or, can they perswade themselves that their own particular Reason denying, or doubting of it, ought to be relyed upon, as a surer Argument of Truth, than the Universal, united Reason of all the World besides affirming it? Every Fool may believe, and pronounce confidently; but wise men will, in matters of *Discourse*, conclude firmly, and, in matters of *Practice*, *act surely*: And, if these will do so too in the Case now before

before us, they muſt prove it, not only *probable* (which yet they can never doe,) but alſo *certain*, and paſt all doubt, that there is no Hell, nor place of Torment for the wicked; or at leaſt, that they themſelves, notwithſtanding all their villainous and licentious Practices, are not to be reckoned of that Number and Character; but, that with a *non obſtante* to all their Revels, their *Profaneneſs*, and ſcandalous Debaucheries of all ſorts, they continue *virtuoſo*'s ſtill; and are that in Truth, which the world in Favour and *Faſhion* (or rather by an *Antiphraſis*) is pleaſed to call them.

In the mean time, it cannot but be matter of juſt Indignation to all knowing and good men, to ſee a Company of Lewd, Shallow-brain'd Huffs, making Atheiſm and Contempt of Religion, the ſole Badge and Character of Wit, Gallantry, and true Diſcretion; and then, over their Pots, and Pipes, claiming and engroſſing all theſe wholly to themſelves; magiſterially cenſuring the Wiſdom of all Antiquity, ſcoffing at all Piety, and (as it were)

were) new modelling the whole World. When yet, ſuch as have had opportunity to ſound theſe Braggers throughly, by having ſometimes endured the Penance of their ſottiſh Company, have found them in Converſe ſo Empty and Inſipid; in Diſcourſe ſo Trifling and Contemptible, that it is impoſſible but that they ſhould give a Credit and an Honour, to whatſoever and whomſoever they ſpeak againſt: They are, indeed, ſuch as ſeem wholly incapable of entertaining any Deſign above the preſent gratification of their Palates, and whoſe very Souls and Thoughts riſe no higher than their Throats; but yet withall, of ſuch a clamorous and provoking Impiety, that they are enough to make the Nation like *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* in their Puniſhment, as they have already made it too like them in their Sins. Certain it is, that Blaſphemy and Irreligion have grown to that daring height here of late years, that had men in any ſober, civilized Heathen Nation, ſpoke or done half ſo much in Contempt of their falſe Gods and Religion,

gion, as ſome in our Days and Nation, wearing the name of Chriſtians, have ſpoke and done againſt God and Chriſt, they would have been infallibly burnt at a Stake, as monſters and publick Enemies of ſociety.

The truth is, the Perſons here reflected upon, are of ſuch a peculiar ſtamp of Impiety, that they ſeem to be a ſet of fellows got together, and formed in to a kind of *Diabolical ſociety*, for the finding out *new experiments* in Vice; and therefore they laugh at the dull, unexperienced, obſolete Sinners of former Times; and ſcorning to keep themſelves within the common, beaten, *broad* way to *Hell*, by being vicious onely at the low rate of *Example* and *Imitation*, they are for ſearching out other ways and *latitudes*, and obliging Poſterity with unheard of Inventions and Diſcoveries in Sin; reſolving herein to admit of no other meaſure of *good* and *evil*, but the Judgment of *Senſuality*, as thoſe who prepare matters to their hands, allow no other meaſure of the Philoſophy and Truth of things, but the

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ſole *Judgment of ſenſe.* And theſe (forſooth) are our great Sages, and thoſe who muſt paſs for the only ſhrewd, thinking and inquiſitive men of the Age; and ſuch as by a long, ſevere, and profound Speculation of Nature, have redeemed themſelves from the *Pedantry* of being Conſcientious, and living vertuouſly, and from ſuch old faſhion'd *Principles* and *Creeds*, as tye up the minds of ſome *narrow-ſpirited, Uncomprehenſive* Zealots, who *know not the world*, nor underſtand, that he onely is the truly *wiſe man*, who, *per fas & nefas*, gets as much as He can.

But, for all this, let Atheiſts and Senſualiſts ſatisfie themſelves as they are able. The former of which will find, that as long as Reaſon keeps Her ground, Religion neither can, nor will loſe Hers. And for the Senſual Epicure, he alſo will find, That there is a certain *living ſpark* within him, which all the Drink he can pour in, will never be able to *quench* or put out; nor will his rotten abuſed Body, have it in it's power to convey any putrefying, conſuming, rotting Quality to the Soul:

No,

No, there is no *Drinking*, or *Swearing*, or *Ranting*, or *Fluxing* a Soul out of its *Immortality*. But that muſt and will ſurvive and abide, in ſpight of Death and the Grave; and live for ever to convince ſuch wretches to their eternal Woe, That the ſo much repeated ornament and flouriſh of their former ſpeeches; (*God damn 'em*) was commonly the trueſt word they ſpoke, though leaſt believed by them, while they ſpoke it.

2dly, The other thing deducible from the foregoing particulars, ſhall be to inform us of the way of attaining to that excellent Privilege, ſo juſtly valued by thoſe who have it, and ſo much talked of by thoſe who have it not; which is *Aſſurance*. *Aſſurance* is properly that perſwaſion or Confidence, which a man takes up of the pardon of his ſins, and his intereſt in God's favour, upon ſuch Grounds and Terms, as the Scripture lays down. But now, ſince the Scripture promiſes eternal Happineſs and Pardon of ſin, upon the ſole condition of Faith, and ſincere Obedience, it is evident, that he onely

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can plead a Title to ſuch a Pardon, whoſe conſcience impartially tells him, that he has performed the required Condition. And this is the only rational *Aſſurance*, which a man can with any ſafety rely, or reſt himſelf upon.

He who in this Caſe would *believe ſurely*, muſt firſt *walk ſurely*; and to do ſo, is to *walk uprightly*. And what that is, we have ſufficiently marked out to us, in thoſe plain and legible lines of Duty requiring us to Demean our ſelves to God, humbly and devoutly; to our Governours obediently; and to our Neighbours juſtly; and to our ſelves ſoberly and temperately. All other Pretences being infinitely vain in themſelves, and fatal in their Conſequences.

It was indeed the way of many in the late times, to bolſter up their Crazy, doating Conſciences, with (I know not what) odd Confidences, founded upon inward *whiſpers of the Spirit, ſtories of ſomething which they called converſion, and marks of Predeſtination:* All of them (as they underſtood them) mere deluſions, Trifles, and Fig-leaves; and ſuch as would be ſure to fall off and leave them

them naked, before that fiery Tribunal, which knows no other way of *Judging* men, but according to their *works*.

Obedience and *Upright Walking* are ſuch Subſtantial, Vital parts of Religion, as, if they be wanting, can never be made up, or commuted for by any formalities of Phantaſtick looks, or language. And the great Queſtion when we come hereafter to be judged, will not be, *How demurely have you looked?* or, *How boldly have you believed? With what length have you prayed?* and, *With what loudneſs and vehemence have you preached?* But, *How holily have you lived?* and, *How uprightly have you walked?* For this, and this only, (with the Merits of Chriſt's Righteouſneſs) will come into Account, before that great *Judge*, who will paſs Sentence upon every man *according to what he has done here in the Fleſh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; and *there is no reſpect of Perſons with Him.*

To whom therefore be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A

SERMON

Preached before the Univerſity, at *Chriſt-Church*, Oxon. 1664.

JOHN XV. 15.

Henceforth I call you not Servants; *for the Servant knows not what his Lord doth: But I have called you* Friends; *for all things that I have heard of my father, have I made known unto you.*

WE have here an Account of Chriſt's friendſhip to his Diſciples; that is, we have the beſt of things repreſented, in the greateſt of Examples. In other men we ſee the Excellency, but in Chriſt the Divinity of Friendſhip. By our Baptiſm and Church-Communion,

we are made *one Body* with Chriſt; but by This we become *one Soul.*

Love is the greateſt of Humane Affections, and Friendſhip is the Nobleſt and moſt Refined Improvement of Love; a quality of the largeſt Compaſs. And it is here admirable to obſerve the aſcending gradation of the Love, which Chriſt bore to his Diſciples. The ſtrange and ſuperlative greatneſs of which will appear from thoſe ſeveral degrees of kindneſs, that it has manifeſted to man, in the ſeveral Periods of His Condition. As,

1ſt. If we conſider him antecedently to his Creation; while he yet lay in the barren Womb of Nothing, and only in the Number of Poſſibilities: and conſequently, could have nothing to recommend him to Chriſt's affection, nor ſhew any thing lovely, but what he ſhould afterwards receive from the ſtamp of a preventing Love. Yet even then did the Love of Chriſt begin to work, and to commence in the firſt Emanations, and purpoſes of goodneſs towards Man; deſigning to provide matter for it ſelf to work

work upon, to create its own object, and like the Sun, in the production of ſome Animals; firſt to give a being, and then to ſhine upon it.

2dly, Let us take the Love of Chriſt as directing it ſelf to Man actually Created, and brought into the World; and ſo all thoſe glorious Endowments of Humane Nature, in its Original State and Innocence, were ſo many Demonſtrations of the munificent goodneſs of Him, *by whom God firſt made*, as well as afterwards *redeemed the world*. There was a Conſult of the whole Trinity, for the making of Man, that ſo He might ſhine as a Maſter-piece, not only of the Art, but alſo of the kindneſs of his Creator; with a noble, and a clear underſtanding, a rightly diſpoſed Will, and a Train of Affections regular, and obſequious, and perfectly conformable to the Dictates, of that high, and divine Principle, *Right Reaſon*. So that, upon the whole matter, he ſtept forth, not only the work of God's hands, but alſo the Copy of his perfections; a kind of Image, or repreſentation of the

Deity in *ſmall*. Infinity contracted into fleſh and blood; and (as I may ſo ſpeak) the Preludium, and firſt Eſſay towards the Incarnation of the Divine Nature. But,

3dly and Laſtly, Let us look upon man, not only as created, and brought into the World, with all theſe great Advantages ſuperadded to his Being; but alſo, as depraved, and faln from them; as an Out-law, and a Rebel, and one that could plead a Title to nothing, but to the higheſt Severities of a Sin-revenging Juſtice. Yet even in this eſtate alſo, the Boundleſs Love of Chriſt began to have warm thoughts, and actings towards ſo wretched a Creature; at this time not onely not Amiable, but highly Odious.

While indeed man was yet uncreated and unborn, tho' he had no poſitive Perfection to preſent, and ſet him off to Chriſt's view; yet he was at leaſt negatively clear: And, like unwritten paper, though it has no Draughts to entertain, yet neither has it any Blots to offend the Eye;

Eye; but is white, and innocent, and fair for an after-Inſcription. But man, once fallen, was nothing, but a great Blur; nothing, but a total univerſal Pollution, and not to be reformed by any thing under a New Creation.

Yet, ſee here the Aſcent, and progreſs of Chriſt's Love. For firſt, if we conſider man, in ſuch a loathſome, and provoking condition; was it not Love enough, that he was ſpared and permitted to enjoy a Being? ſince, not to put a Traytor to Death, is a ſingular mercy. But then, not only to continue his Being, but to adorn it with Privilege, and from the Number of *Subjects* to take him into the Retinue of *Servants*, this was yet a greater Love. For every one that may be fit to be tolerated in a Prince's Dominions, is not therefore fit to be admitted into his Family: nor is any Prince's Court to be commenſurate to his Kingdom. But then farther, to advance him from a *Servant*, to a *Friend*; from only living in his Houſe, to lying in his Boſom; this is an Inſtance of Favour above the

Rate of a created goodneſs, an Act for none, but the Son of God, who came to do every thing in *Miracle*, to love ſupernaturally, and to pardon infinitely, and even to lay down the Sovereign, while he aſſumed the Saviour.

The Text ſpeaks the winning Behaviour, and gracious Condeſcenſion of Chriſt to his Diſciples, in owning them for his Friends, who were more than ſufficiently honoured by being his *Servants*. For ſtill theſe words of his muſt be underſtood, not according to the bare Rigor of the Letter, but according to the Arts and Allowances of Expreſſion: not as if the Relation of *Friends* had actually diſcharged them from that of *Servants*; but that of the two *Relations*, Chriſt was pleaſed to over-look the meaner, and without any mention of that, to entitle and denominate them ſolely from the more Honourable.

For the further illuſtration of which, we muſt premiſe this, as a certain and fundamental Truth, That ſo far as Service imports Duty and Subjection, all created

created Beings, whether Men or Angels, bear the neceſſary and eſſential Relation of *Servants* to God, and conſequently to Chriſt, who is *God Bleſſed for ever:* and this Relation is ſo neceſſary, that God himſelf cannot diſpenſe with it, nor diſcharge a Rational Creature from it: for although conſequentially indeed he may do ſo, by the Annihilation of ſuch a Creature, and the taking away his Being, yet ſuppoſing the continuance of his Being, God cannot effect, that a Creature which has his Being from, and his Dependance upon him, ſhould not ſtand obliged to do him the utmoſt ſervice that his nature enables Him to do. For, to ſuppoſe the contrary, would be irregular and oppoſite to the Law of Nature, which, conſiſting in a fixed unalterable Relation of one Nature to another, is, upon that account, even by God himſelf, Indiſpenſable. Foraſmuch as having once made a Creature, he cannot cauſe that *that* Creature ſhould not owe a Natural Relation to his Maker, both of Subjection, and Dependance, (the very Eſſence of a Creature importing ſo much)

much) to which Relation if he behaves himself unsutably, he goes contrary to his Nature, and the Laws of it; which God, the Author of Nature, cannot warrant without being contrary to Himself. From all which it follows, that even in our highest estate of Sanctity and Privilege, we yet retain the unavoidable obligation of *Christ's Servants*; though still with an Advantage as great as the Obligation, where *the service is perfect freedom*: so that with reference to such a Lord, *to serve*, and *to be free*, are Terms not Consistent only, but absolutely Equivalent.

Nevertheless, since the Name of *Servants* has of old been reckoned to imply a certain meanness of Mind, as well as lowness of Condition, and the ill qualities of many who served, have rendred the condition it self not very creditable; especially in those Ages, and places of the World, in which the Condition of Servants was extreamly different from what it is now amongst us; they being generally Slaves, and such as were bought and sold

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for Money, and conſequently reckoned but amongſt the other Goods and Chattels of their Lord, or Maſter: It was for this Reaſon, that Chriſt thought fit to Wave the Appellation of *Servant* here, as, according to the common uſe of it amongſt the Jews (and, at that time moſt Nations beſides) importing theſe three Qualifications, which, being directly contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, were by no means to be allowed in any of Chriſt's Diſciples.

1. The Firſt whereof is that here mentioned in the Text; *viz.* An utter unacquaintance with his Maſter's Deſigns, in theſe words; *The Servant knows not what his Lord doeth.* For ſeldom does any man of ſenſe make his Servant his *Counſellour*, for fear of making him his *Governour* too. A Maſter for the moſt part keeps his choiceſt Goods lockt up from his Servant, but much more his Mind. A Servant is to know nothing, but his Maſter's Commands; and in theſe alſo, not to know the reaſon of them.

Neither is he to ſtand aloof off from his Counſels

Counſels onely, but ſometimes from his Preſence alſo; and ſo far as decency is duty, it is ſometimes his duty to avoid him. But the Voice of Chriſt in his Goſpel is, *Come to me all ye that are heavy laden.* The Condition of a Servant ſtaves him off to a diſtance; but the Goſpel ſpeaks nothing but Allurement, Attractives, and Invitation. *The Magiſterial Law* bids the Perſon under it, *Go, and he muſt go*: But the Goſpel ſays to every Believer, *Come, and he cometh.* A Servant dwells remote from all Knowledge of his Lord's Purpoſes. He lives as a kind of Foreigner under the ſame Roof; a *Domeſtick*, and yet a *Stranger* too.

2dly, The Name of Servant, imports a ſlaviſh and degenerous Awe of Mind; As it is in *Rom.* 8. 5. *God has not given us the ſpirit of Bondage again to fear.* He who ſerves, has ſtill the low and ignoble reſtraints of Dread upon his Spirits; which, in Buſineſs, and even in the midſt of Action, cramps and ties up his Activity. He fears his Maſter's anger, but deſigns not his favour. *Quicken me* (ſays *David*) *with*

with thy free Spirit. It is the *freedom* of the *Spirit*, that gives worth and life to the performance. But a Servant commonly is leſs free in Mind than in Condition; his very Will ſeems to be in bonds and ſhackles, and Deſire it ſelf under a kind of Durance and Captivity. In all that a Servant does he is ſcarce a Voluntary Agent, but when he ſerves himſelf: All his Services otherwiſe, not flowing naturally from Propenſity and Inclination, but being drawn and forced from him by Terror and Coaction. In any work he is put to, let the Maſter withdraw his *Eye*, and he will quickly take off his *hand*.

3^d^. The appellation of *Servant*, imports a mercenary Temper and Diſpoſition; and denotes ſuch an one as makes his Reward, both the ſole motive, and meaſure of his Obedience. He neither Loves the thing commanded, nor the Perſon who commands it, but is wholly and only intent upon his own Emolument. All kindneſſes done Him, and all that is given Him, over and above what is ſtrictly *juſt* and *his due*, makes Him

Him rather worſe than better. And this is an obſervation that never fails, where any one has ſo much bounty, and ſo little wit, as to make the Experiment. For a Servant rarely or never aſcribes what he receives, to the meer Liberality and Generoſity of the Donor, but to his own Worth and Merit, and to the need which he ſuppoſes there is of him; which opinion alone will be ſure to make any one of a mean, ſervile Spirit, inſolent and intolerable.

And thus I have ſhewn what the Qualities of a Servant uſually are (or, at leaſt were in that Countrey, where our Saviour lived and converſed, when he ſpake theſe words) which, no doubt, were the Cauſe why he would not treat his Diſciples (whom he deſigned to be of a quite contrary Diſpoſition) with this Appellation.

Come we therefore now in the next place, to ſhew what is included in that great Character, and Privilege which he was pleaſed to vouchſafe both to them, and to all Believers, in calling, and accounting

counting them his *Friends*. It includes in it (I conceive) theſe following Things.

1. Freedom of Acceſs. Houſe and Heart, and all are open for the Reception of a friend. The Entrance is not beſet with ſolemn Excuſes, and lingring Delays; but the Paſſage is eaſie, and free from all Obſtruction, and not only admits, but even invites the Comer. How different, for the moſt part, is the ſame Man from himſelf as he ſuſtains the Perſon of a Magiſtrate, and as he ſuſtains that of a Friend! As a Magiſtrate or great Officer he locks himſelf up from all Approaches by the multiplied Formalities of Attendance, by the Diſtance of Ceremony, and Grandeur; So many hungry Officers to be paſſed through, ſo many Threſholds to be ſaluted, ſo many Days to be ſpent in waiting for an Opportunity of, perhaps, but half an hour's Converſe.

But when He is to be entertain'd, whoſe Friendſhip, not whoſe Buſineſs demands an Entrance; thoſe Formalities preſently diſappear, all Impediments vaniſh, and the Rigours of the Magiſtrate, ſubmit to

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the Endearments of a Friend. He opens and yields himſelf to the Man of Buſineſs with difficulty and reluctancy, but offers himſelf to the viſits of a Friend with facility, and all the meeting Readineſs of Appetite and Deſire. The Reception of one is as different from the Admiſſion of the other, as when the Earth falls open under the Inciſions of the Plough, and when it gapes and greedily opens it ſelf to Drink in the Dew of Heaven, or the Refreſhments of a ſhower: or there is as much difference between them, as when a Man reaches out his Arms to take up a Burthen, and when he reaches them out to embrace.

'Tis confeſſed, that the vaſt Diſtance, that Sin had put between the offending Creature, and the offended Creatour, required the help of ſome great Umpire, and Interceſſour, to open him a new way of acceſs to God; and this Chriſt did for us as Mediatour. But we read of no Mediatour to bring us to Chriſt; For though, being God by Nature, he dwells in the height of Majeſty, and the inacceſſible Glories of a Deity; yet to keep off all

ſtrangeneſs

ſtrangeneſs between himſelf, and the Sons of Men, he has condeſcended to a Cognation and Conſanguinity with us, he has cloathed himſelf with *Fleſh* and *Blood*, that ſo he might ſubdue his Glories to a Poſſibility of humane Converſe. And therefore, he that denies himſelf an immediate Acceſs to Chriſt, affronts him in the great Relation of a Friend; and as opening himſelf both to our Perſons, and to our Wants, with the greateſt Tenderneſs, and the freeſt Invitation. There is none who acts a Friend by a Deputy, or can be familiar by Proxy.

2. The ſecond Privilege of Friendſhip is a favourable Conſtruction of all Paſſages between Friends, that are not of ſo high, and ſo malign a Nature, as to diſſolve the Relation. *Love covers a multitude of Sins*, ſays the *Apoſtle*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 8. When a ſcar cannot be taken away, the next kind Office is to hide it. *Love* is never ſo *blind*, as when it is to ſpy faults. It is like the Painter, who being to draw the Picture of a Friend having a Blemiſh in one Eye, would picture only the other

ſide of his Face. It is a Noble, and a great thing to cover the Blemiſhes, and to excuſe the failings of a Friend; to draw a Curtain before his ſtains, and to diſplay his Perfections; to bury his Weakneſſes in ſilence, but to proclaim his vertues upon the Houſe-top. It is an Imitation of the charities of Heaven, which, when the Creature lies proſtrate in the weakneſs of ſleep, and wearineſs, ſpreads the Covering of Night, and Darkneſs over it, to conceal it in that Condition; But as ſoon as our Spirits are refreſhed, and Nature returns to its morning Vigour, God then bids the Sun riſe, and the Day ſhine upon us, both to advance and to ſhew that Activity.

It is the enobling Office of the Underſtanding, to correct the fallacious and miſtaken Reports of Senſe, and to aſſure us that the Staff in the Water is ſtreight, though our Eye would tell us it is crooked. So it is the Excellency of Friendſhip to rectifie, or at leaſt to qualifie the Malignity of thoſe Surmiſes, that would miſrepent a Friend, and traduce him in our Thoughts.

Thoughts. Am I told that my Friend has done me an Injury, or that he has committed any undecent Action? why, the firſt Debt that I both owe to his Friendſhip, and that he may challenge from mine, is rather to queſtion the Truth of the Report, than preſently to believe my Friend unworthy. Or if Matter of Fact breaks out and blazes with too great an Evidence to be denied, or ſo much as doubted of; why, ſtill there are other Lenitives, that Friendſhip will apply, before it will be brought to the Decretory Rigours of a Condemning Sentence. A Friend will be ſure to act the Part of *an Advocate*, before he will aſſume that of *a Judge*. And there are few Actions ſo ill, (unleſs they are of a very deep and black Tincture indeed) but will admit of ſome Extenuation at leaſt from thoſe Common Topicks of Humane Frailty; ſuch as are Ignorance or Inadvertency, Paſſion or Surprize, Company or Sollicitation; with many other ſuch things, which may go a great Way towards an Excuſing of the *Agent*, though they cannot abſolutely

juſtifie the *Action*. All which Apologies *for*, and Alleviations of Faults, though they are the Heights of Humanity, yet they are not the Favours, but the Duties of Friendſhip. Charity it ſelf commands us, where we know no Ill, to think well of all. But Friendſhip, that always goes a Pitch higher, gives a Man a peculiar Right, and Claim to the good Opinion of his Friend. And, if we juſtly look upon a Pronenes *to find faults*, as a very ill and a mean thing, we are to remember, that a Pronenes *to believe them* is next to it.

We have ſeen here the Demeanour of Friendſhip between Man and Man: but how is it, think we now, between Chriſt, and the Soul that depends upon him? Is he any ways ſhort in theſe Offices of Tenderneſs and Mitigation? no aſſuredly; but by infinite Degrees Superiour. For where our Heart does but *Relent*, his *Melts*; where our Eye pities, his Bowels yearn. How many Frowardneſſes of ours does he ſmother, how many Indignities does he paſs by, and how many Affronts does he put

put up at our hands, becauſe his Love is invincible, and his Friendſhip unchangeable? He rates every Action, every ſinful Infirmity with the Allowances of Mercy; and never weighs the Sin, but together with it He weighs the force of the Inducement; how much of it is to be attributed to Choice, how much to the Violence of the Temptation, to the Stratagem of the Occaſion, and the yielding Frailties of weak Nature.

Should we try Men, at that rate, that we try Chriſt, we ſhould quickly find, that the largeſt Stock of Humane friendſhip would be too little for us to ſpend long upon. But his Compaſſion follows us with an infinite Supply. He is God in his *Friendſhip*, as well as in his *Nature*, and therefore we ſinfull Creatures are not took upon Advantages, nor conſumed in our Provocations.

See this exemplified in his Behaviour to his Diſciples, while he was yet upon Earth: How ready was he to excuſe and cover their Infirmities! At the laſt and bittereſt Scene of his Life, when he was

ſo full of Agony and Horrour upon the Approach of a diſmal Death, and ſo had moſt need of the Refreſhments of Society, and the friendly Aſſiſtances of his Diſciples; and when alſo he deſired no more of them, but only for a while to ſit up and pray with Him. Yet they, like Perſons wholly untouched with his Agonies, and unmoved with his Paſſionate Entreaties, forget both his, and their own Cares, and ſecurely ſleep away all Concern for him, or themſelves either. Now, what a fierce, and ſarcaſtick Reprehenſion may we imagine this would have drawn from the Friendſhips of the World, that act but to an Humane Pitch! and yet what a gentle one did it receive from Chriſt! In *Matt.* 26.40? No more than, *What could you not watch with me for one hour*? And when from this Admonition they took only occaſion to redouble their Fault, and to ſleep again, ſo that upon a ſecond, and third Admonition they had nothing to plead for their unſeaſonable Drowſineſs, yet then Chriſt, who was the only Perſon concerned to have reſented,

ſented, and aggravated this their Unkindneſs, finds an Extenuation for it, when they themſelves could not. *The Spirit indeed is willing* (ſays he) but the Fleſh is weak. As if he had ſaid, I know your Hearts, and am ſatisfied of your Affection, and therefore accept your Will, and compaſſionate your Weakneſs. So benign, ſo gracious is the Friendſhip of Chriſt, ſo anſwerable to our Wants, ſo ſutable to their Frailties. Happy that Man, who has a Friend to point out to him the Perfection of Duty, and yet to pardon him in the Lapſes of his Infirmity.

3. The third Privilege of Friendſhip is a Sympathy in *Joy* and *Grief*. When a Man ſhall have diffuſed his Life; his ſelf, and his whole Concernments ſo far, that he can weep his Sorrows with anothers Eyes; when he has another Heart beſides his own, both to ſhare, and to ſupport his Griefs, and when, if his Joys overflow, he can treaſure up the Overplus and Redundancy of them in another Breaſt; ſo that he can (as it were) ſhake off the Solitude of a ſingle Nature, by

dwelling in two Bodies at once, and living by anothers Breath, this ſurely is the Height, the very Spirit and Perfection of all humane Felicities.

It is a true and happy Obſervation of that great Philoſopher the Lord *Verulam*, that this is the Benefit of Communication of our Minds to others, *That Sorrows by being Communicated grow leſs, and Joys greater.* And indeed, Sorrow, like a Stream, loſes it ſelf in many Channels; and Joy, like a Ray of the Sun, reflects with a greater Ardour, and Quickneſs, when it rebounds upon a Man from the Breaſt of his Friend.

Now Friendſhip is the only Scene, upon which the Glorious Truth of this great Propoſition, can be fully acted and drawn forth. Which indeed is a Summary Deſcription of the Sweets of Friendſhip: and the whole Life of a Friend, in the ſeveral Parts and Inſtances of it, is only a more diffuſe Comment upon, and a plainer Explication of this Divine Aphoriſm. Friendſhip never reſtrains a Pleaſure to a ſingle Fruition. But ſuch is the Royal

Nature

Nature of this Quality, that it ſtill expreſſes it ſelf in the Style of Kings, as *We do* this, or That; and This is *our* happineſs; and ſuch or ſuch a thing belongs *to us*; when the immediate Poſſeſſion of it is veſted only in one. Nothing certainly in Nature, can ſo peculiarly gratifie the Noble Diſpoſitions of Humanity, as for one man to ſee another ſo much himſelf, as to ſigh his Griefs, and groan his Pains, to ſing his Joys, and (as it were) to do and feel every thing by Sympathy, and ſecret inexpreſſible Communications. Thus it is upon an humane Account.

Let us now ſee, how Chriſt ſuſtains and makes good this generous Quality of a Friend. And this we ſhall find fully ſet forth to us, in *Heb.* 4. 15. Where he is ſaid to be a *mercifull High Prieſt, touched with the feeling of our Infirmities; and that in all our Afflictions he is afflicted, Iſa.* 63. 9. And no doubt, with the ſame Bowels and Meltings of Affection, with which any tender Mother hears and bemoans the Groanings of her ſick Child, does Chriſt hear and ſympathize with the ſpiritual

Agonies

Agonies of a Soul under Deſertion, or the Preſſures of ſome ſtinging Affliction. It is enough that he underſtands the Exact Meaſures of our Strengths, and Weakneſſes; that *he knows* our Frame; as it is in *Pſalm* 103. 14. And that he does not only know, but Emphatically, that he *remembers* alſo *that we are but Duſt*: Obſerve that ſignal Paſſage of his loving Commiſeration; As ſoon as he had riſen from the Dead, and met *Mary Magdalen*, in *Mark* 16. 7. he ſends this Meſſage of his Reſurrection by her. Go *Tell my Diſciples* and *Peter*, that *I am riſen*. What? was not *Peter* one of his Diſciples? Why then is he mentioned particularly and by himſelf, as if he were exempted out of their Number? Why, we know into what a plunge he had newly caſt himſelf by denying his Maſter: upon occaſion of which he was now ſtrugling with all the Perplexities and Horrours of Mind imaginable, leſt Chriſt might in like manner deny and diſown him *before his Father*, and ſo repay one Denial with another. Hereupon Chriſt particularly applies the Comforts

Comforts of his Reſurrection to him, as if he had ſaid. *Tell all my Diſciples*, but be ſure eſpecially to tell poor *Peter*, *that I am riſen from the Dead*; and that, notwithſtanding his Denial of me, the Benefits of my Reſurrection belong to him, as much as to any of the reſt. This is the Privilege of the Saints, to have a Companion and a Supporter in all their Miſeries, in all the doubtfull Turnings and dolefull Paſſages of their Lives. In ſumm, this Happineſs does Chriſt vouchſafe to all his, that as a *Saviour* he once ſuffered for them, and that as a *Friend* he always *ſuffers with them.*

4. The fourth Privilege of Friendſhip is that which is here ſpecified in the Text, a Communication of Secrets. A Boſom ſecret and a Boſom friend are uſually put together. And this from Chriſt to the Soul, is not only Kindneſs, but alſo Honour and Advancement; 'tis for him to vouch it one of his Privy Council. Nothing under a Jewel is taken into the Cabinet. A ſecret is the Apple of our Eye; it will bear no Touch, nor Approach, we

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uſe to cover nothing, but what we account a Rarity. And therefore to communicate a Secret to any one, is to exalt him to one of the Royalties of Heaven. For none knows the Secrets of a Man's Mind, but his God, his Conſcience, and his Friend. Neither would any prudent Man let ſuch a thing go out of his own Heart, had he not another Heart beſides his own to receive it.

Now it was of old a Privilege, with which God was pleaſed to honour ſuch as ſerved him at the Rate of an Extraordinary Obedience, thus to admit them to a Knowledge of many of his great Counſels lock'd up from the reſt of the World. When God had deſigned the Deſtruction of *Sodom*, the Scripture repreſents him as unable to conceal that great Purpoſe from *Abraham*, whom he always treated as *his Friend*, and Acquaintance; that is, not only with Love, but alſo with Intimacy and Familiarity, in *Geneſ.* 18. v. 17. *And the Lord ſaid, ſhall I hide from Abraham the thing that I go about to do?* He thought it a Violation of the Rights of Friendſhip

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to reſerve his Deſign wholly to himſelf. And St. *James* tells us, in *Jam.* 2. 23. *That Abraham was called the Friend of God:* and therefore had a Kind of Claim to the Knowledge of his Secrets, and the Participation of his Counſels. Alſo in *Exod.* 33. v. 11. It is ſaid of God, *that he ſpoke to Moſes as a Man ſpeaketh to his Friend.* And that, not only for the Familiarity and Facility of Addreſs, but alſo for the peculiar Communications of his Mind. *Moſes* was with him in the Retirements of the Mount, received there his Dictates, and his private Inſtructions, as his Deputy and Viceroy; and when the Multitude and Congregation of *Iſrael* were thundred away, and kept off from any approach to it, he was honour'd with an intimate and immediate admiſſion. The Prieſts indeed were taken into a near attendance upon God; but ſtill there was a degree of a nearer Converſe, and the Intereſt of a *Friend* was above the Privileges of the higheſt *Servant*. In *Exod.* 19. 24. *Thou ſhalt come up* (ſays God) *thou and Aaron with thee, but let not the Prieſts*

Prieſts and the People break through to come up unto the Lord, leſt the Lord break forth upon them. And if we proceed further, we ſhall ſtill find a continuation of the ſame Privilege: *Pſalm* 25. 14. *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* Nothing is to be conceal'd from the other ſelf. To be a Friend, and to be Conſcious are terms equivalent.

Now if God maintained ſuch Intimacies with thoſe, whom he loved, under the *Law*, (which was a Diſpenſation of greater Diſtance,) we may be ſure that under the *Goſpel*, (the very Nature of which imports Condeſcenſion, and Compliance) there muſt needs be the ſame, with much greater Advantage. And therefore when *God* had *manifeſted himſelf in the Fleſh*, how ſacredly did he preſerve this Privilege? how freely did Chriſt unboſom himſelf to his Diſciples? in *Luke* 8. 10. *Unto you* (ſays he) *it is given to know the myſteries of the Kingdom of God: but unto others in Parables; that ſeeing they might not ſee*: Such ſhall be permitted to caſt an Eye into the Ark, and to look into

into the very *Holy of holies*. And again in *Matth.* 13. 17. *Many Prophets and righteous men heve deſired to ſee thoſe things which ye ſee, and have not ſeen them: and to hear thoſe things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* Neither did he treat them with theſe peculiarities of favour in the extraordinary diſcoveries of the Goſpel only, but alſo of thoſe incommunicable Revelations of the Divine Love, in reference to their own perſonal intereſt in it. In *Rev.* 2. 17. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and will give him a white ſtone, and in the ſtone a new name written, which no man knoweth, ſaving he that receiveth it.* Aſſurance is a Rarity covered from the Inſpection of the world. A ſecret that none can know, but God, and the perſon that is bleſſed with it. It is writ in a private Character, not to be read, nor underſtood but by the Conſcience, to which the Spirit of God has vouchſafed to decypher it. Every Believer lives upon an inward proviſion of Comfort, that the world is a ſtranger to.

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5. The fifth advantage of Friendſhip is *Counſel* and *Advice*. A man will ſometimes need not only another *Heart*, but alſo another *head* beſides his own. In ſolitude there is not only diſcomfort; but weakneſs alſo. And that ſaying of the wiſe man *Eccles.* 4. 10. *Woe to him that is alone*, is verified upon none ſo much, as upon the Friendleſs perſon: When a man ſhall be perplex'd with Knots and Problems of buſineſs and contrary affairs; where the determination is dubious, and both parts of theContrariety ſeem equally weighty, ſo that which way ſoever the Choice determines, a man is ſure to venture a great Concern. How happy then is it to fetch in aid from another perſon, whoſe judgment may be greater than my own, and whoſe Concernment is ſure not to be leſs! There are ſome paſſages of a man's affairs that would quite break a ſingle underſtanding. So many intricacies, ſo many Labyrinths, are there in them, that the Succours of reaſon fail, the very force and ſpirit of it being loſt in an actual Intention ſcattered upon ſeveral

veral claſhing objects at once; in which caſe the Interpoſal of a Friend is like the ſupply of a freſh party to a beſieged, yielding City.

Now Chriſt is not failing in this office of a friend alſo. For in that illuſtrious prediction of *Eſay* 9. 6. amongſt the reſt of his great Titles, he is called *mighty Counſellor*. And his Counſel is not only ſure, but alſo free. It is not under the Goſpel of Chriſt, as under ſome Laws of Men, where you muſt be forced to buy your Counſel, and oftentimes pay dear for bad advice. No, *He is a light to thoſe that ſit in darkneſs*. And no man ſees the Sun, no man purchaſes the Light, nor errs, if he walks by it. The only price, that Chriſt ſets upon his Counſel, is, that we follow it; and that we do that, which is beſt for us to doe. He is not only Light for us to ſee by, but alſo *Light* for us to ſee *with*. He is *underſtanding to the ignorant*, and *Eyes to the Blind*: And whoſoever has both a faithfull and a diſcreet friend, to guide him in the dark, ſlippery, and dangerous paſſages of his Life, may

carry his Eyes in another mans head, and yet ſee never the worſe. In 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. the Apoſtle tells us, that Chriſt is made to us, not only *Sanctification and Redemption*, but *Wiſdom* too: We are his Members, and it is but Natural, that all the Members, of the Body, ſhould be guided by the wiſdom of the Head.

And therefore let every Believer comfort himſelf in this high Privilege, That in the great things, that concern his eternal Peace, he is not left to ſtand or fall by the uncertain directions of his own judgment. No, ſad were his condition if he ſhould be ſo; when he is to encounter an Enemy made up of Wiles and Stratagems, an old ſerpent, and a long experienced Deceiver, and ſucceſsfull at the Trade for ſome thouſands of years.

The Inequality of the match, between ſuch an one, and the ſubtilleſt of us would quickly appear by a fatal Circumvention: There muſt be a *wiſdom from above* to over-reach and maſter this Helliſh wiſdom *from beneath*. And this every ſanctifyed Perſon is ſure of in his great Friend,

Friend, *in whom all the treaſures of wiſdom dwell.* Treaſures that flow out, and are imparted freely both in direction, and aſſiſtance to all that belong to him. He never leaves any of His, perplex'd, amazed, or bewildred, where the welfare of their Souls requires a better judgment than their own, either to guide them in their Duty, or to diſentangle them from a Temptation. Whoſoever has Chriſt for his Friend, ſhall be ſure of Counſel, and whoſoever is his own Friend, will be ſure to obey it.

6. The laſt and crowning Privilege, or rather property of Friendſhip is *Conſtancy.* He onely is a Friend, whoſe Friendſhip lives as long as himſelf; and who ceaſes to *Love*, and to *Breath* at the ſame inſtant. Not that I yet ſtate Conſtancy in ſuch an abſurd, ſenceleſs, and irrational Continuance in Friendſhip, as no Injuries, or Provocations whatſoever, can break off. For there are ſome Injuries that extinguiſh the very Relation between Friends. *In which caſe*, a man ceaſes to to be a Friend, not from any Inconſtancy in his Friendſhip, but from Defect of an

Object for his Friendſhip to exert it ſelf upon. It is one thing for the Father to ceaſe to be a Father, by caſting off his Son; and another for him to ceaſe to be ſo, by the Death of his Son. In this the *Relation* is at an end for want of a Correlate: So in Friendſhip, there are ſome paſſages of that high and hoſtile Nature, that they really and properly conſtitute and denominate the Perſon guilty of them, an Enemy; and if ſo, how can the other Perſon poſſibly continue a friend, ſince Friendſhip eſſentially requires that it be between Two at leaſt; and there can be no Friendſhip, where there are not Two friends?

No body is bound to look upon his Backbiter, or his Underminer; his Betrayer, or his Oppreſſor, as his friend. Nor indeed, is it poſſible that he ſhould doe ſo, unleſs he could alter the Conſtitution and Order of Things; and eſtabliſh a new Nature, and a new Morality in the World. For to remain unſenſible of ſuch Provocations, is not Conſtancy, but Apathy. And therefore they diſcharge the Perſon, ſo treated,

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from the proper Obligations of a Friend; though Chriſtianity, I confeſs, binds him to the Duties of a Neighbour.

But to give you the true Nature, and Meaſures of Conſtancy; It is ſuch a ſtability, and firmneſs of Friendſhip, as overlooks, and paſſes by all thoſe leſſer failures of Kindneſs and Reſpect, that partly through Paſſion, partly through Indiſcretion, and ſuch other frailties incident to Humane Nature, a man may be ſometimes guilty of, and yet ſtill retain the ſame habitual Good-will, and prevailing Propenſity of Mind, to his friend, that he had before. And whoſe Friendſhip ſoever is of that ſtrength, and duration, as to ſtand its ground againſt, and remain unſhaken by ſuch aſſaults; (which yet are ſtrong enough to ſhake down and annihilate the Friendſhip of little puny Minds;) ſuch an one (I ſay) has reached all the true meaſures of Conſtancy: His Friendſhip is of a noble Make, and a laſting Conſiſtency; it reſembles Marble, and deſerves to be wrote upon it.

But how few Tempers in the World,

are of that magnanimous Frame, as to reach the heights of ſo great a Vertue: Many offer at the Effects of Friendſhip, but they doe not laſt; they are promiſing in the Beginning, but they fail, and jade, and tire in the Proſecution. For moſt people in the World are acted by Levity, and Humour, by ſtrange and irrational Changes. And how often may we meet with thoſe, who are one while courteous, civil, and obliging, (at leaſt to their proportion;) but within a ſmall time after, are ſo ſupercilious, ſharp, troubleſome, fierce, and exceptious, that they are not only ſhort of the true Character of Friendſhip, but become the very Sores and Burthens of Society? Such low, ſuch worthleſs Diſpoſitions, how eaſily are they diſcovered, how juſtly are they deſpiſed? But now that we may paſs from one Contrary to another; *Chriſt, who is the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever, in his Being*, is ſo alſo in his *Affection*. He is not of the Number, or Nature, of thoſe pitifull, mean pretenders to Friendſhip, who perhaps will love and ſmile upon

you

you one day, and not ſo much as know you the next: Many of which ſort there are in the World, who are not ſo much courted outwardly, but that inwardly they are deteſted much more.

Friendſhip is a kind of Covenant; and moſt Covenants run upon mutual Terms and Conditions. And therefore ſo long as we are Exact in fulfilling the Condition on our parts, I mean, Exact according to the meaſures of *Sincerity*, though not of *Perfection*, we may be ſure, that *Chriſt* will not fail in the leaſt *Iota* to fulfill every thing on his. The favour of Relations, Patrons and Princes, is uncertain, tickliſh and variable; and the Friendſhip which they take up, upon the Accounts of Judgment, and Merit, they moſt times lay down out of Humour. But the Friendſhip of *Chriſt* has none of theſe weakneſſes, no ſuch hollowneſs or unſoundneſs in it. *For neither Principalities nor Powers, things preſent, nor things to come*; no, nor all the rage and malice of Hell ſhall be able to pluck the meaneſt of

Chriſt's friends out of his Boſom. For, *whom he loves, he loves to the End.*

Now from the Particulars hitherto diſcourſed of, we may inferr and learn theſe two things: 1. The *Excellency*, and Value of Friendſhip, Chriſt *the Son of the moſt High God*, the ſecond Perſon in the glorious Trinity, took upon him *our Nature*, that he might give a great Inſtance and Example of this Vertue; and condeſcended to be *a Man*, only that he might be *a Friend*. Our Creator, our Lord and King he was before; but he would needs come down from all this, and in a ſort become our Equal, that he might partake of that Noble Quality that is properly between *Equals*. Chriſt took not upon him *Fleſh* and *Blood*, that he might conquer and rule Nations, lead Armies, or poſſeſs Palaces; but that he might have the Relenting, the Tenderneſs, and the Compaſſions of Humane Nature, which render it properly capable of Friendſhip; and, in a word, that he might have *our Heart* and we have His. God himſelf ſets Friendſhip above all

Conſiderations

Conſiderations of Kindred or Conſanguinity, as the greateſt Ground and Argument of mutual Endearment, in *Deut.* 15. 6. *If thy Brother, the Son of thy Mother, or thy Son, or thy Daughter, or the Wife of thy Boſom, or thy Friend, which is as thine own Soul, entice thee to go and ſerve other Gods, thou ſhalt not conſent unto him.* The Emphaſis of the Expreſſion is very remarkable, it being a Gradation, or Aſcent, by ſeveral degrees of Dearneſs, to that which is the Higheſt of all. Neither *Wife*, nor *Brother*, *Son* nor *Daughter*, though the neareſt in Cognation, are allowed to ſtand in Competition with *a friend*; who, if he fully anſwers the Duties of that great Relation, is indeed better, and more valuable, than all of them put together, and may ſerve inſtead of them; ſo that he, who has a firm, a worthy, and ſincere friend, may *want* all the reſt, without *miſſing* them. That which lies in a man's Boſom, ſhould be dear to him; but that which lies within his Heart, ought to be much dearer.

2. In the next place, we learn from hence

hence the high Advantage of being truly Pious and Religious. When we have ſaid, and done all; it is only the true Chriſtian, and the Religious Perſon, who is, or can be, ſure of a friend; ſure of obtaining, ſure of keeping him. But as for the friendſhip of the World; when a man ſhall have done all that he can to make one his *friend*, imployed the utmoſt of his Wit and Labour, beaten his Brains, and emptied his Purſe, to create an Endearment between him and the Perſon, whoſe friendſhip he deſires, he may, in the end, upon all theſe Endeavours, and Attempts, be forced to write *Vanity* and Fruſtration: For, by them all, he may at laſt be no more able to get into the other's Heart, than he is to thruſt his hand into a Pillar of Braſs. The man's Affection, amidſt all theſe Kindneſſes done him, remaining wholly unconcerned, and impregnable; juſt like a Rock, which being plied continually by the Waves, ſtill throws them back again into the Boſom of the Sea that ſent them, but is not at all moved by any of them.

People

People at firſt, while they are young and raw, and ſoft natured, are apt to think it an eaſie thing to gain Love, and reckon their own friendſhip a ſure price of another man's. But when Experience ſhall have once opened their Eyes, and ſhewn them the hardneſs of moſt Hearts, the hollowneſs of others, and the Baſeneſs and Ingratitude of almoſt all, they will then find, that a friend *is the gift of God*; and that He only, who made Hearts, can unite them. For it is He, who creates thoſe Sympathies, and ſutableneſſes of Nature, that are the foundation of all true friendſhip, and then by his Providence brings Perſons ſo affected together.

It is an Expreſſion frequent in Scripture, but infinitely more ſignificant, than at firſt it is uſually obſerved to be: Namely, *That God gave ſuch or ſuch a perſon grace, or favour in another's Eyes.* As for inſtance; in *Geneſ.* 39. 21. it is ſaid of *Joſeph*, *That the Lord was with him, and gave him favour in the ſight of the Keeper of the Priſon.* Still it is an inviſible Hand from Heaven,

Heaven, that ties this Knot, and mingles Hearts, and Souls, by ſtrange, ſecret, and unaccountable Conjunctions.

That Heart ſhall ſurrender it ſelf, and its friendſhip, to one man, at firſt view, which another has, in vain, been laying Siege to for many years, by all the repeated Acts of Kindneſs imaginable.

Nay, ſo far is Friendſhip from being of any humane Production, that, unleſs Nature be pre-diſpoſed to it, by its own Propenſity or Inclination, no Arts of Obligation ſhall be able to abate the ſecret Hatreds, and Hoſtilities of ſome Perſons towards others. No friendly Offices, no Addreſſes, no Benefits whatſoever, ſhall ever alter or allay that Diabolical Rancour, that frets and ferments in ſome helliſh Breaſts, but that upon all occaſions it will foam out at its foul mouth in Slander and Invective, and ſometimes bite too in a ſhrewd Turn or a *ſecret Blow*. This is true and undeniable upon frequent *Experience*; and happy thoſe who can learn it at the Coſt of other men's.

But

But now, on the contrary, he who will give up his Name to Chriſt in *Faith unfeigned*, and a ſincere Obedience to all his Righteous Laws, ſhall be ſure to find *Love* for *Love*, and *Friendſhip* for *Friendſhip*. The Succeſs is certain and infallible; and none ever yet miſcarried in the Attempt. For Chriſt freely offers his Friendſhip to all; and ſets no other rate upon ſo vaſt a purchaſe, but only that we would ſuffer him to be our *Friend*. Thou perhaps ſpendeſt thy precious time in waiting upon ſuch a great One, and thy Eſtate in preſenting him; and, probably, after all, haſt no other reward, but ſometimes to be *ſmiled upon*, and always to be *ſmiled at*; and when thy greateſt and moſt preſſing Occaſions ſhall call for ſuccour, and relief, then to be deſerted and caſt off, *and not known*.

Now, I ſay, turn the ſtream of thy Endeavours another way, and beſtow but half that hearty, ſedulous attendance upon thy Saviour, in the Duties of Prayer and Mortification; and be at half that Expence in Charitable Works, by relieving Chriſt

Chriſt in his poor Members; and, in a word, ſtudy as much to pleaſe him *who died for thee*, as thou doſt to court and humour thy great Patron, who *cares not for thee*, and thou ſhalt make him thy friend for ever; A friend, who ſhall own thee in thy loweſt Condition, ſpeak Comfort to thee in all thy Sorrows, Counſel thee in all thy Doubts, anſwer all thy Wants, and, in a word, *never leave thee, nor forſake thee.* But when all the hopes, that thou haſt raiſed upon the promiſes, or ſuppoſed kindneſſes of the faſtidious, and fallacious great Ones of the World, ſhall fail, and upbraid thee to thy face, he ſhall then take thee into his Boſom, embrace, cheriſh, and ſupport thee; and, as the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes it, *He ſhall guide thee with his Counſel here, and afterwards receive thee into Glory.*

To which God of his Mercy vouchſafe to bring us all; To whom be rendred and aſcribed, &c. Amen.

A Di-

A Diſcourſe againſt long Extemporary PRAYERS:

IN A

SERMON

ON

ECCLES. V. 2.

Be not raſh with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be haſty to utter any thing before God: for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth; therefore let thy words be few.

WE have here the Wiſeſt of Men inſtructing us how to behave our ſelves before God in his own Houſe; and particularly when we addreſs to him in the moſt important of all Duties, which is *Prayer*. *Solomon* had the honour to be ſpoken to by God himſelf, and therefore, in all likelihood, none more fit to teach us

us how to ſpeak to God. A great Privilege certainly for *Duſt and Aſhes* to be admitted to; and therefore it will concern us to manage it ſo, that in theſe our Approaches to the King of Heaven, his Goodneſs may not cauſe us to forget his Greatneſs, nor (as it is but too uſual for Subjects to uſe *Privilege* againſt *Prerogative*) his Honour ſuffer by his Condeſcenſion.

In the Words we have theſe three Things obſervable.

1. That whoſoever appears in the Houſe of God, and particularly in the Way of Prayer, ought to reckon himſelf, in a more eſpecial manner, placed in the ſight and preſence of God.

2. That the vaſt and infinite diſtance between God and Him, ought to create in him all imaginable Awe, and Reverence in ſuch his Addreſſes to God.

3*ly*. and *Laſtly*; That this Reverence required of him, is to conſiſt in a ſerious preparation of his Thoughts, and a ſober government of his Expreſſions: Neither is *his Mouth to be raſh, nor his Heart to be haſty, in uttering any thing before God.* But his *Words to be few.* Theſe

Theſe things are evidently contained in the Words, and doe as evidently contain the whole ſenſe of them. But I ſhall gather them all into this one Propoſition; Namely,

That Premeditation of Thought, and Brevity of Expreſſion, are the great Ingredients of that Reverence, that is required to a pious, acceptable, and devout Prayer.

For the better handling of which, we will, in the firſt place, conſider how, and by what way it is, that *Prayer* works upon, or prevails with God, for the obtaining of the things, we pray for. Concerning which, I ſhall lay down this General Rule, That the Way, by which Prayer prevails with God, is wholly different from that, by which it prevails with Men. And to give you this more particularly.

1. Firſt of all, It prevails not with God by way of *Information* or Notification of the Thing to Him, which we deſire of Him. With Men, indeed, this is the common, and with Wiſe men the chief, and ſhould be the only way of obtaining

what we ask of them. We repreſent, and lay before them our Wants and Indigences, and the miſery of our Condition; Which being made known to them, the Quality and Condition of the Thing asked for, and of the Perſons, who ask it, induces them to give that to us, and to doe that for us, which we deſire, and petition for: But it is not ſo in our Addreſſes to God; for he knows our Wants, and our Condition better than we our ſelves: He is before-hand with all our Prayers, *Matth.* 6. 8. *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him*: And in *Pſal.* 139. 2. *Thou underſtandeſt my thought afar off*. God knows our Thoughts before the very Heart that conceives them. And how then can he, who is but of yeſterday, ſuggeſt any thing new to that Eternal mind! how can Ignorance inform Omniſcience!

2*ly*. Neither does Prayer prevail with God by way of *perſwaſion*, or working upon the Affections, ſo, as thereby to move him to pity or compaſſion. This indeed is the moſt uſual, and moſt effectual way to

to prevail with Men; who, for the generality are, one part *Reaſon*, and nine parts *Affection*. So that one of a voluble Tongue, and a dextrous Inſinuation, may doe what he will with vulgar Minds, and with *Wiſe men* too, at their *weak times*. But God, who is as void of Paſſion, or Affection, as he is of Quantity, or Corporeity, is not to be dealt with this way. He values not our Rhetorick, nor our pathetical Harangues. He who applies to God, applies to an Infinite Almighty Reaſon, a pure Act, all Intellect, The firſt Mover, and therefore not to be moved, or wrought upon Himſelf. In all Paſſion, the Mind ſuffers (as the very ſignification of the Word imports,) but abſolute, entire perfection cannot ſuffer; it is and muſt be Immoveable, and by conſequence Impaſſible. And therefore,

In the *Third* and *Laſt* place, much leſs is God to be prevailed upon by Importunity, and (as it were) wearying him into a Conceſſion of what we beg of him. Though with Men, we know, this alſo is not unuſual. A Notable Inſtance of

which we have in *Luke* 18. *v.* 4, 5. where the unjuſt Judge being with a reſtleſs Vehemence ſued to for Juſtice, ſays thus within himſelf: *Though I fear not God, nor regard Man, yet becauſe this Widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, leſt by her continual Coming ſhe weary me.*

In like manner, how often are Beggars relieved only for their eager and rude Importunity; not that the perſon who relieves them, is thereby informed or ſatisfied of their real Want, nor yet moved to pity them by all their Cry and Cant, but to rid himſelf from their vexatious Noiſe and Din; ſo that to purchaſe his Quiet by a little Alms, he gratifies the Beggar; but indeed *relieves* himſelf. But now, this way is further from prevailing with God than either of the former. For as Omniſcience is not to be informed, ſo neither is Omnipotence to be wearied. We may much more eaſily think to clamour the Sun and Stars out of their Courſes, than to word the great Creator of them out of the ſteady purpoſes of his own Will, by all the vehemence and loudneſs

loudneſs of our Petitions. Men may tire themſelves with their own Prayers, but God is not to be tired. The rapid motion, and whirl of things here below, interrupts not the inviolable Reſt and Calmneſs of the Nobler Beings above. While the Winds roar and bluſter here in the Firſt and Second Regions of the Air, there is a perfect ſerenity in the Third. Men's Deſires cannot controll God's Decrees.

And thus I have ſhewn, that the Three ways by which *Men prevail with Men*, in their Prayers and Applications to them, have no place at all, in giving any efficacy to their Addreſſes to God.

But you will ask then, Upon what account is it, that Prayer becomes prevalent and efficacious with God, ſo as to procure us the good things we pray for? I anſwer upon this; That it is the fulfilling of that *Condition*, upon which God has freely promiſed to convey his Bleſſings to Men. God of his own abſolute, unaccountable good will and pleaſure, has thought fit to appoint and fix upon this, as the means by which he will ſupply and

anſwer the Wants of Mankind. As for inſtance; Suppoſe a Prince ſhould declare to any one of his Subjects, that if he ſhall appear before him every morning in his Bed-chamber, ſhall receive of him a thouſand Talents. We muſt not here imagine, that the Subject, by making this appearance, does either move or perſwade his Prince to give him ſuch a Summ of Money: No, he only performs the Condition of the promiſe, and thereby acquires a Right to the thing promiſed. He does indeed hereby *engage* his Prince to give him this Summ, though he does by no means *perſwade* him: Or rather, to ſpeak more ſtrictly and properly, the Prince's own Juſtice, and Veracity, is an Engagement upon the Prince himſelf, to make good his promiſe to him, who fulfills the Conditions of it.

But you will ſay, That, upon this Ground it will follow, that when we obtain any thing of God by Prayer, we have it upon Claim of Juſtice, and not by Way of Gift, as a free Reſult of his Bounty.

I an-

I anſwer; that both theſe are very well conſiſtent; for though he, who makes a Promiſe upon a certain Condition, is bound in Juſtice, upon the fulfilling of that Condition, to perform his promiſe; yet it was perfectly Grace and Goodneſs: Bounty and free Mercy, that firſt induced him to make the Promiſe, and particularly to ſtate the Tenour of it, upon ſuch a Condition. *If we confeſs our Sins*, ſays the Apoſtle, 1 *John* 1. 9. *God is faithfull and juſt to forgive us our Sins.* Can any thing be freer, and more the Effect of meer Grace, than the Forgiveneſs of Sins? And yet it is certain from this Scripture and many more, that it is firmly promiſed us upon Condition of a penitent hearty Confeſſion of them; and conſequently, as certain it is, that God ſtands oblig'd here even by his *Faithfulneſs and Juſtice*, to make good this his Promiſe of Forgiveneſs to thoſe who come up to the Terms of it by ſuch a Confeſſion.

In like manner, for Prayer, in reference to the good Things prayed for. He who prays for a thing, as God has appointed

him, gets thereby a right to the thing prayed for: But it is a Right, not ſpringing from any Merit or Condignity, either in the Prayer it ſelf, or the Perſon who makes it, to the *Bleſſing*, which he prays for; but from God's Veracity, Truth, and Juſtice, who having appointed Prayer as the *Condition* of that *Bleſſing*, cannot but ſtand to what he himſelf had appointed; Though that he did appoint it, was the free Reſult and Determination of his own Will.

We have a full Account of this whole Matter from God's own Mouth, in *Pſalm* 50. *Call upon me* (ſays God) *in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.* Theſe are evidently the Terms, upon which God anſwers Prayers; In which Caſe, there is no doubt, but the Deliverance is ſtill of more Worth than the Prayer; and there is as little doubt alſo, that without ſuch a previous Declaration made on God's part, a perſon ſo in Trouble or Diſtreſs might pray his Heart out, and yet God not be in the leaſt obliged by all his Prayers, either in Juſtice or Honour, or

indeed

indeed ſo much as in Mercy to deliver him; for Mercy is free, and Miſery cannot oblige it. In a word, Prayer procures *deliverance from Trouble*, juſt as *Naaman*'s dipping himſelf ſeven times in *Jordan* procured him a Deliverance from his Leproſie; not by any Vertue in it ſelf adequate to ſo great an Effect, you may be ſure; but from this, That it was appointed by God as the Condition of his Recovery; and ſo obliged the Power of him, who appointed it, to give force and vertue to his own Inſtitution, beyond what the Nature of the Thing it ſelf could otherwiſe have raiſed it to.

Let this therefore be fix'd upon, as the Ground-work of what we are to ſay upon this Subject: That Prayer prevails with God for the *Bleſſing* that we pray for, neither by Way of *Information*, nor yet of *Perſuaſion*, and much leſs by the *Importunity* of him who prays, and leaſt of all by any *Worth* in the Prayer it ſelf, equal to the Thing prayed for; but it prevails ſolely, and entirely upon this Account, that it is freely appointed by God, as the

ſtated,

ſtated, allowed *Condition*, upon which he will diſpence his Bleſſings to Mankind.

But before I diſmiſs this Conſideration, it may be enquired; *Whence it is* that Prayer, rather than any other thing, comes to be appointed by God for this *Condition*. In anſwer to which, Tho' God's Soveraign Will be a ſufficient Reaſon of its own Counſels and Determinations, and conſequently a more than ſufficient Anſwer to all our Enquiries; yet ſince God in his Infinite Wiſdom ſtill adapts means to Ends, and never appoints a Thing to any uſe, but what it has a particular, and a natural Fitneſs for; I ſhall therefore preſume to aſſign a Reaſon, why Prayer, before all other things, ſhould be appointed to this Noble uſe, of being the *Condition* and glorious Conduit whereby to derive the Bounties of Heaven upon the Sons of Men. And it is this; becauſe Prayer, of all other Acts of a Rational Nature, does moſt peculiarly qualify a Man to be a fit Object of the Divine Favour, by being moſt eminently and properly *an Act of Dependance upon God*;

God: Since to pray, or beg a thing of another, in the very Nature and Notion of it, imports theſe two Things: 1. That the Perſon praying ſtands in need of ſome Good, which he is not able by any Power of his own to procure for himſelf: And, 2. That he acknowledges it in the power, and pleaſure of the Perſon, whom he prays to, to conferr it upon him. And this is properly that which Men call *to depend*.

But ſome may reply; There is an Univerſal Dependance of all things upon God; for as much as, He being the great Fountain, and Source of Being firſt Created, and ſince ſupports them by the word of his Power; and conſequently that this Dependance belongs indifferently to the *Wicked* as well as to the *Juſt*, whoſe *Prayer* nevertheleſs is declared *an Abomination to God*.

But to this the Anſwer is obvious, That the Dependance here ſpoken of is meant, not of a *Natural*, but of a *Moral* Dependance. The firſt is Neceſſary, the other Voluntary. The firſt Common to all, the other

other proper to the Pious. The firſt reſpects God barely as a Creator, the other addreſſes to him alſo as a Father. Now ſuch a Dependance upon God it is, that is properly ſeen in Prayer. And being ſo, if we ſhould in all humble Reverence ſet our ſelves to examine the Wiſdom of the Divine proceeding in this Matter, even by the Meaſures of our own Reaſon, what could be more Rationally thought of for the propereſt Inſtrument, to bring down God's Bleſſings upon the World, than ſuch a Temper of Mind, as makes a Man diſown all Ability in himſelf to ſupply his own Wants, and at the ſame time own a Tranſcendent Fulneſs and ſufficiency in God to do it for him? And what can be more agreeable to all Principles both of Reaſon and Religion, than that a Creature endued with Underſtanding and Will, ſhould acknowledge that Dependance upon his Maker, by a free act of Choice, which other Creatures have upon him, only by Neceſſity of Nature?

But ſtill, there is one Objection more againſt our foregoing Aſſertion, *viz. That*

Prayer

Prayer obtains the things prayed for, only as a Condition, *and not by way of Importunity or Perſwaſion*; For is not Prayer ſaid to prevail by frequency, *Luke* 18. 7. and by Fervency, or Earneſtneſs, in *James* 5. v. 16. and is not this a fair proof that God is importuned and perſwaded into a Grant of our petitions?

To this I anſwer two Things, 1. That whereſoever God is ſaid to anſwer Prayers, either for their *Frequency* or *Fervency*, it is ſpoken of him only ἀνθρωπαθῶς, according to the manner of Men; and, conſequently, ought to be underſtood only of the *effect* or iſſue of ſuch Prayers, in the ſucceſs certainly attending them, and not of the *manner* of *their efficiency*, that it is by *perſwading*, or working upon the Paſſions: As if we ſhould ſay, frequent, fervent, and importunate Prayers, are as certainly followed with God's grant of the Thing prayed for, as Men uſe to grant that, which being overcome by exceſſive Importunity, and Perſwaſion, they cannot find in their hearts to deny. 2*ly*. I anſwer further; That frequency and fervency

vency of Prayer prove effectual, to procure of God the Things prayed for, upon no other account, but as they are Acts of *Dependance* upon God: which Dependance we have already proved to be that Thing essentially included in Prayer, for which God has been pleased to make Prayer the Condition, upon which he determines to grant Men such things as they need, and duly apply to him for. So that still there is nothing of *Perswasion* in the case.

And thus having shewn (and I hope fully and clearly) how *Prayer* operates towards the obtaining of the Divine Blessings; namely, as a *Condition* appointed by God for that purpose, and no otherwise: And withall, for what Reason it is singled out of all other Acts of a Rational Nature, to be this *Condition*; namely, because it is the grand Instance of such a Nature's *dependance* upon God. We shall now from the same principle inferr also, Upon what account the highest Reverence of God is so indispensably required of us in Prayer, and all sort of Irreverence so diametrically opposite to, and

destructive

deſtructive of, the very Nature of it. And it will appear, to be upon this, That in what degree any one lays aſide his Reverence of God, in the ſame he alſo quits his *Dependance* upon Him : Foraſmuch as in every Irreverent Act, a Man treats God, as if he had indeed no need of Him, and behaves himſelf, as if he ſtood upon his own bottom, Abſolute and Self-ſufficient. This is the natural Language, the true Signification and Import of all Irreverence.

Now in all Addreſſes, either to God or Man, by Speech, our Reverence to them muſt conſiſt of, and ſhew it ſelf in, theſe Two things.

Firſt, A carefull Regulation of our Thoughts, that are to dictate, and to govern our Words ; which is done by Premeditation : And, *Secondly*, a due ordering of our Words, that are to proceed from, and to expreſs our Thoughts ; which is done by pertinence, and *brevity* of Expreſſion.

David directing his Prayer to God, joyns theſe two together, as the two great, integral parts of it ; in *Pſalm* 19. 14.

Let

Let the Words of my Mouth, and the Meditations of my Heart, be acceptable in thy ſight, O Lord. So that, it ſeems, his Prayer adequately and entirely conſiſted of thoſe Two things, *Meditation* and *Expreſſion*, as it were, the *Matter* and *Form* of that noble Compoſure. There being no mention at all of Diſtortion of Face, ſanctified Grimace, ſolemn Wink, or foaming at the Mouth, and the like; all which are Circumſtances of Prayer of a later date, and brought into requeſt by thoſe fantaſtick Zealots, who had a way of praying, as aſtoniſhing to the *Eyes*, as to the *Ears* of thoſe that heard them. Well then; the firſt Ingredient of a pious, and reverential Prayer, is a previous regulation of the Thoughts, as the Text expreſſes it moſt emphatically; *Let not thy Heart be haſty to utter any thing before God*; that is, in other words. Let it not venture to throw out its crude, extemporary, ſuddain and miſhapen Conceptions in the face of Infinite Perfection. Let not thy Heart *conceive*, and *bring forth* together. This is monſtrous, and unnatural. All Abortion

tion is from Infirmity and Defect. And time is required to form the Iſſue of the Mind, as well as that of the Body. The fitneſs, or unfitneſs of the firſt Thoughts, cannot be judged of, but by reflexion of the ſecond: And be the Invention never ſo fruitfull, yet in the Mind, as in the Earth, that which is caſt into it, muſt lie hid and covered for a while, before it can be fit to ſhoot forth. Theſe are the Methods of Nature, and it is ſeldom but the Acts of Religion conform to them.

He who is to pray, would he ſeriouſly *judge* of the Work that is before him, has more to conſider of, than, either his Heart can hold, or his Head well turn it ſelf to. *Prayer* is one of the greateſt, and the hardeſt Works, that a man has to do in this World; and was ever any thing difficult, or glorious, atchieved by a ſuddain Caſt of a Thought? a flying Stricture of the Imagination? *Preſence* of Mind is indeed good, but *Haſt* is not ſo. And therefore, let this be concluded upon, That in the Buſineſs of Prayer, to pretend to Reverence, when there is no Premeditation,

is both Impudence and Contradiction.

Now this Premeditation ought to reſpect theſe three Things: 1. The *Perſon*, whom we pray to. 2. The *Matter* of our Prayers; And, 3*ly*. The *Order* and *Diſpoſition* of them.

1. And firſt, for the *Perſon whom we pray to*. The ſame is to imploy, who muſt needs alſo non-plus and aſtoniſh thy Meditations, and be made the Object of thy Thoughts, who infinitely tranſcends them. For all the knowing and reaſoning Faculties of the Soul, are utterly baffled, and at a loſs, when they offer at any Idea of the great God. Nevertheleſs, ſince it is hard, if not impoſſible, to imprint an Awe upon the Affections, without ſutable Notions firſt formed in the Apprehenſions. We muſt in our Prayers, endeavour at leaſt, to bring theſe as near to God, as we can, by conſidering ſuch of his Divine perfections, as have, by their Effects, in a great meaſure, manifeſted themſelves to our Senſes, and, in a much greater, to the Diſcourſes of our Reaſon,

As

As firſt; Conſider with thy ſelf, how great and glorious a Being that muſt needs be, that raiſed ſo vaſt and beautifull a Fabrick, as this of the World, out of Nothing, with the breath of his Mouth, and can and will, with the ſame, reduce it to Nothing again; and then conſider, that this is that high, amazing, incomprehenſible Being, whom thou addreſſeſt thy pitifull Self to in Prayer.

Conſider next, his Infinite, All-ſearching Knowledge, which looks through and through the moſt ſecret of our Thoughts, ranſacks every corner of the Heart, ponders the moſt inward deſigns and ends of the Soul in all a man's Actions. And then conſider, That this is the God, whom thou haſt to deal with in Prayer; the God, who obſerves the poſtures, the frame and motion of thy Mind, in all thy Approaches to Him; and whoſe piercing Eye it is impoſſible to elude, or eſcape, by all the tricks, and arts, of the ſubtilleſt, and moſt refined Hypocriſy. And laſtly, Conſider the great, the fiery, and the implacable Jealouſy, that he has

for his Honour; and that he has no other uſe of the whole Creation, but to ſerve the Ends of it: And above all, that he will, in a moſt peculiar manner, *be honoured of thoſe who draw near to him*; and will by no means ſuffer himſelf to be mock'd and affronted, under a pretence of being worſhiped; nor endure, that a wretched, contemptible, ſinfull Creature, who is but a piece of living Dirt at beſt, ſhould at the ſame time *bend the Knee to him, and ſpit in his face.* And now conſider, that this is the God, whom thou prayeſt to; and whom thou uſeſt with ſuch intolerable Indignity, in every unworthy Prayer, thou putteſt up to Him; every bold, ſawcy, and familiar Word, that (upon confidence of being one of *God's Elect*) thou preſumeſt to debaſe ſo great a Majeſty with: And for an Inſtance of the dreadfull Curſe, that attends ſuch a daring Irreverence, conſider how God uſed *Nadab* and *Abihu* for venturing to offer *ſtrange Fire before him*; and then know, that every unhallowed, unfitting Prayer, is a *ſtrange Fire*: A Fire, that will be ſure

to

to deſtroy the *Offering*, though Mercy ſhould ſpare the *Offerer*. Conſider theſe things ſeriouſly, deeply, and ſeverely, till the Conſideration of them affect thy Heart, and humbles thy Spirit, with ſuch awefull Apprehenſions of thy Maker, and ſuch abject Reflections upon thy ſelf, as may lay thee in the Duſt before Him: And know, that the lower thou falleſt, the higher will thy Prayer rebound: And that thou art never ſo fit to pray to God, as when a ſenſe of thy own unworthineſs makes thee aſhamed even to ſpeak to Him.

2*ly*, The ſecond Object of our Premeditation, *is the Matter of our Prayers*. For, as we are to conſider, *whom we are to pray to*; ſo are we to conſider alſo, *what we are to pray for*; and this requires no ordinary Application of Thought, to diſtinguiſh, or judge of. Men's prayers are generally dictated by their Deſires, and their Deſires are the Iſſues of their Affections; and their Affections are, for the moſt part, influenced by their Corruptions. The firſt conſtituent principle of a well-con-

ceived Prayer, is to know, *What not to pray for:* which the Scripture aſſures us, that ſome doe not, while they *pray for what they may ſpend upon their Luſts*, James 4. 3. Asking ſuch things, as it is a Contumely to God to hear, and Damnation to themſelves to receive. No Man is to pray for any thing, either ſinfull, or directly tending to Sin. No Man is to pray for a *Temptation*, and much leſs to deſire God to be his *Tempter*; which he would certainly be, ſhould he, at the inſtance of any Man's prayer, adminiſter fuel to his ſinfull or abſurd Appetites. Nor is any one to ask of God things mean and trivial, and beneath the Majeſty of Heaven, to be concerned about, or ſolemnly addreſſed to for. Nor, laſtly, is any one to admit into his Petitions things ſuperfluous, or extravagant; ſuch as Wealth, Greatneſs and Honour. Which we are ſo far from being warranted to beg of God, that we are to beg his Grace to deſpiſe and undervalue them; and it were much, if the ſame things ſhould be the proper Objects both of our Self-denial, and of

our

our Prayers too; and that we ſhould be allowed to ſollicit the ſatisfaction, and enjoyned to endeavour the mortification of the ſame Deſires.

The Things that we are to pray for, are either, 1*ſt*. Things of *abſolute Neceſſity*; or, 2*ly*. Things of *unqueſtionable Charity*. *Of the firſt ſort*, are all ſpiritual Graces required in us, as the indiſpenſable Conditions of our Salvation: Such as are, *Repentance*, *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Temperance*, and all other Vertues, that are either the parts, or principles, of a pious Life. Theſe are to be the prime ſubject matter of our Prayers; and we ſhall find, that nothing comes this way ſo eaſily from Heaven, as thoſe things that will aſſuredly bring us to it. The Spirit dictates all ſuch Petitions, and God himſelf is firſt the Author, and then the Fulfiller of them; owning and accepting them, both as our Duty, and his own Production. *The other ſort of things*, that may allowably be prayed for, are things of manifeſt, unqueſtionable Charity: Such as are a competent meaſure of the inno-

cent Comforts of Life, as Health, Peace, Maintenance, and a Succeſs of our honeſt Labours: And yet, even theſe but Conditionally, and with perfect Reſignation to the Will and Wiſdom of the Soveraign Diſpoſer of all that belongs to us; Who (if he finds it more for his Honour, to have us ſerve him with ſick, crazy, languiſhing Bodies, with poverty, and extreme want of all things; and laſtly, with our Country all in a Flame about our Ears) ought in all this, and much more, to over-rule our Prayers, and Deſires, into an abſolute Acquieſcence in his Allwiſe diſpoſal of things; and to convince us, that our Prayers are ſometimes beſt anſwered, when our Deſires are moſt oppoſed.

In fine, to ſtate the whole matter of our Prayers in one word. Nothing can be fit for us to pray for, but what is fit and honourable for our great Mediator and *Maſter of Requeſts*, *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, to intercede for. This is to be the unchangeable Rule and Meaſure of all our Petitions. And then, if Chriſt is to convey

convey theſe our Petitions to his Father, can any one dare to make him who was Holineſs and Purity it ſelf, an Advocate and Sollicitor for his Luſts? Him who was nothing but Meekneſs, Lowlineſs, and Humility, his Providetore for ſuch things as can only feed his Pride, and fluſh his Ambition? No certainly; when we come as Suppliants to the Throne of Grace, where Chriſt ſits as Interceſſor at God's right hand, nothing can be fit to proceed out of our Mouth, but what is fit to paſs through His.

3*ly*. The *Third* and *Laſt* Thing, that calls for a previous Meditation to our Prayers, is the *Order* and *Diſpoſition* of them. For though God does not command us to ſet off our Prayers with Dreſs, and Artifice, to flouriſh it in Trope and Metaphor, to beg our daily Bread in blank Verſe, or to ſhew any thing of the *Poet* in our Devotions, but *Indigence* and *Want*; I ſay, though God is far from requiring ſuch things of us in our Prayers, yet he requires that we ſhould manage them with Senſe and Reaſon. Fineneſs is not expected,

pected, but Decency is; and though we cannot declaim, as Orators, yet he will have us ſpeak like Men, and tender him the Reſults of that Underſtanding and Judgment, that eſſentially conſtitute a Rational Nature.

But I ſhall briefly caſt what I have to ſay upon this particular, into theſe following Aſſertions.

1. That nothing can expreſs our Reverence to God in Prayer, that would paſs for Irreverence towards a Great Man. Let any Subject tender his Prince a Petition, fraught with Nonſenſe and Incoherence, Confuſion and Impertinence; and can he expect that Majeſty ſhould anſwer it with any thing but a deaf Ear, a frowningEye,(or,at beſt) vouchſafe it any other Reward, but by a gracious Oblivion to *forgive* the perſon, and to *forget* the petition?

2*ly*. Nothing Abſurd and Irrational, and ſuch as a Wiſe man would deſpiſe, can be acceptable to God in Prayer. *Solomon* expreſly tells us in *Eccleſiaſtes* 5. *v*. 4. that *God has no pleaſure in Fools*; nor is it poſſible

poſſible that an Infinite Wiſdom ſhould. The Scripture all along expreſſes *Sin* and *Wickedneſs* by the Name of *Folly*: And therefore, certainly Folly is too near of kin to it, to find any Approbation from God in ſo great a Duty: it is the ſimplicity of the *Heart*, and not of the *Head*, that is the beſt Enditer of our Petitions. That which proceeds from the latter, is undoubtedly the *ſacrifice of fools*; and God is never more weary of *Sacrifice*, than when a Fool is the Prieſt, and Folly the Oblation.

3*dly*. and *Laſtly*, Nothing rude, ſlight, and careleſs; or, indeed, leſs than the very beſt that a man can offer, can be acceptable, or pleaſing, to God in Prayer. *If ye offer the Blind for ſacrifice, is it not Evil? If ye offer the Lame, and the Sick, is it not Evil? Offer it now to thy Governour, and ſee whether he will be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy Perſon, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts?* *Malachi* 1. 8. God rigidly expects a Return of his own Gifts; and where he has given ability, will be ſerved by Acts proportionable to it. And he who has

parts

parts to raiſe, and propagate his own Honour by, but none to imploy in the Worſhip of him, that gave them, does (as I may ſo expreſs it) refuſe to wear God's Livery in his own Service, adds Sacrilege to Prophaneneſs, ſtrips and ſtarves his Devotions, and (in a word) falls directly under the Dint of that Curſe, denounced in the laſt Verſe of the 1*ſt.* of *Malachi*, *Curſed be the Deceiver, that hath in his Flock a Male, and voweth, and ſacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing.* The ſame is here, both the Deceiver, and the Deceived too; for God very well knows *what* he gives Men, and *why*; And where he has beſtowed Judgment, Learning, and Utterance, will not endure that Men ſhould be accurate in their Diſcourſe, and looſe in their Devotions; or think, that the great *Author of every good and perfect Gift*, will be put off with Ramble, and confuſed Talk, Babble, and Tautology.

And thus much for the *Order* and Diſpoſition of our Prayers, which certainly requires precedent Thought and Meditation. God has declared himſelf the *God*

of

of Order in all things; and will have it obſerved, in what he commands others, as well as in what he does himſelf. *Order* is the great Rule, or Art, by which God made the World, and by which he ſtill governs it: Nay, the World it ſelf is nothing elſe; and all this glorious Syſtem of things, is but the Chaos put into order: And how then can God, who has ſo eminently owned himſelf concerned for this excellent thing, brook ſuch Abſurdity and Confuſion, as the ſlovenly and profane Negligence of ſome treats him with, in their moſt ſolemn Addreſſes to him? All which is the natural, unavoidable Conſequent of Unpreparedneſs, and want of Premeditation; without which, whoſoever preſumes to pray, cannot be ſo properly ſaid to *approach* to, as to *break* in upon God. And ſurely, he who is ſo hardy, as to do ſo, has no reaſon in the Earth to expect that the ſucceſs, which follows his prayers, ſhould be greater than the preparation, that goes before them.

Now from what has been hitherto diſcourſed

ſcourſed of, this firſt and grand Qualification of a pious and devout Prayer, to wit, *Premeditation of Thought*, what can be ſo naturally, and ſo uſefully inferr'd, as the high Expediency, or rather the abſolute Neceſſity of a Set-form of Prayer, to guide our Devotions by? We have lived in an Age that has deſpiſed, contradicted, and counter-acted all the principles and practices of the Primitive Chriſtians, in taking the meaſures of their Duty both to God and Man, and of their Behaviour both in matters Civil and Religious; but in nothing more ſcandalouſly, than in their vile abuſe of the great Duty of Prayer; concerning which, though it may with the cleareſt truth be affirmed, That there has been no Church yet of any account in the Chriſtian World, but what has governed its publick Worſhip of God by a Liturgy, or Set-form of Prayer; yet theſe enthuſiaſtick Innovators, the bold and blind Reformers of all Antiquity, and *wiſer* than the whole Catholick Church beſides, introduced into the room of it, a ſawcy, ſenceleſs, Extemporary way

way of ſpeaking to God; affirming, that this was a *Praying by the Spirit*; and that the Uſe of all Set-forms was *ſtinting of the Spirit*. A pretence, I confeſs, popular, and plauſible enough, with ſuch Idiots, as take the Sound of Words, for the Sence of them. But, for the full Confutation of it, (which, I hope, ſhall be done both eaſily and briefly too) I ſhall advance this one Aſſertion in direct Contradiction to that; Namely,

That the Praying by a Set-form, is not a ſtinting of the Spirit; and the Praying extempore truly and properly is ſo.

For the proving and making out of which, we will firſt conſider, *What it is to Pray by the Spirit*. A thing much talkt of, but not ſo convenient for the talkers of it, and pretenders to it, to have it rightly ſtated and underſtood. In ſhort, it includes in it theſe two Things:

1*ſt*. A praying with the Heart, which is ſometimes called the *Spirit*, or *Inward man*; and ſo it is properly oppoſed to Hypocritical Lip-devotions, in which the *Heart* or *Spirit* does not go along with a man's Words.

2*ly*. It

2*ly*. It includes in it alſo a praying according to the Rules preſcribed by God's *Holy Spirit*, and held forth to us in his Revealed Word, which Word was both Dictated and Confirmed by this Spirit: And ſo it is oppoſed to the praying unlawfully, or unwarrantably; and that, either in reſpect of the Matter, or Manner of our Prayers. As, when we deſire of God ſuch things, or in ſuch a way, *as the Spirit of God*, ſpeaking in his Holy Word, does by no means warrant or approve of. So that to *Pray by the Spirit*, ſignifies neither more nor leſs, but to pray knowingly, heartily, and affectionately, for ſuch things, and in ſuch a manner, as the Holy Ghoſt, in Scripture, either commands or allows of. As for any other kind of *Praying by the Spirit*, upon the beſt enquiry that I can make into theſe matters, I can find none. And if ſome ſay as (I know they both impudently and blaſphemouſly doe) that, *to pray by the Spirit*, is to have the Spirit immediately inſpiring them, and by ſuch Inſpiration ſpeaking within them, and ſo

dictating

dictating their prayers to them, let them either produce plain Scripture, or doe a Miracle to prove this by. But till then, he who ſhall conſider, what kind of prayers theſe pretenders to *the Spirit* have been notable for, will find, that they have as little Cauſe to father their Prayers, as their Practices, upon the Spirit of God.

Theſe Two things are certain, and I doe particularly recommend them to your Obſervation. One, that this way of *Praying by the Spirit* (as they call it) was begun, and firſt brought into uſe here in *England*, in Queen *Elizabeth*'s days, by a *Popiſh* Prieſt and *Dominican* Fryar, one *Faithfull Commin* by Name; who counterfeiting himſelf a Proteſtant, and a Zealot of the higheſt form, ſet up this new Spiritual way of Praying, with a deſign to bring the People firſt to a Contempt, and from thence to an utter Hatred and Diſuſe of our *Common-prayer*; which he ſtill reviled as only a Tranſlation of the Maſs; thereby to diſtract men's Minds, and to divide our Church. And this he did with ſuch ſucceſs, that we have lived to ſee the

Effects of his Labours in the utter ſubverſion of Church and State. Which helliſh Negotiation, when this malicious Hypocrite came to *Rome* to give the Pope an account of, he received of him (as ſo notable a ſervice well deſerved) beſides a *thouſand* Thanks, *two thouſand* Ducats for his pains. So that now you ſee here the Original of this Extempore-way of praying by the Spirit. The other thing that I would obſerve to you, is, That in the neighbour Nation of *Scotland*, one of the greateſt * Monſters of Men, that, I believe, ever lived, and actually in league with the Devil; was yet, by the confeſſion of all that heard him, the moſt Excellent at this Extempore-way of *Praying by the Spirit*, of any Man in his time; none was able to come near him, or to compare with him. But ſurely now, he who ſhall venture to aſcribe the Prayers of ſuch a Wretch, made up of Adulteries, Inceſt, Witchcraft, and other Villainies, not to be named, to the *Spirit of God*, may as well ſtrike in with the

* Major *John Weyer*: ſee *Revillac Redivivo*.

the *Phariſees*, and aſcribe the Miracles of Chriſt to the Devil. And thus having ſhewn, both what ought to be meant by *Praying by the Spirit*, and what ought not, cannot be meant by it; let us now ſee whether a *Set-form*, or this *Extemporary-way*, be the greater hinderer, and ſtinter of it: In order to which, I ſhall lay down theſe three Aſſertions.

1. That the Soul, or Mind of Man, is but of a limited Nature in all its Workings, and conſequently, cannot ſupply two diſtinct Faculties, at the ſame time, to the ſame height of Operation.

2*ly*. That the finding words and Expreſſions for Prayer, is the proper buſineſs of the Brain and the Invention; and, that the finding Devotion and Affection to accompany, and go along with thoſe Expreſſions, is properly the Work, and Buſineſs of the Heart.

3*ly*. That this Devotion, and Affection, is indiſpenſably required in *Prayer*, as the principal and moſt Eſſential part of it, and that in which the Spirituality of it does moſt properly conſiſt.

Now from theſe three Things put together, this muſt naturally and neceſſarily follow; That as, *Spiritual Prayer*, or *Praying by the Spirit*, taken in the right ſenſe of the word, conſiſts properly in that Affection, and Devotion, that the Heart exerciſes and imploys in the Work of Prayer; ſo, whatſoever gives the Soul ſcope and liberty to exerciſe and imploy this Affection and Devotion, that does moſt effectually help and enlarge the Spirit of Prayer; and, whatſoever diverts the Soul from employing ſuch Affection, and Devotion, that does moſt directly ſtint and hinder it. Accordingly let this now be our Rule, whereby to judge of the Efficacy of a *Set-form*, and of the *Extempore-way*, in the preſent Buſineſs. As for a Set-form, in which the Words are ready prepared to our hands, the Soul has nothing to doe, but to attend to the work of raiſing the Affections and Devotions, to go along with thoſe words; So that all the Powers of the Soul are took up in applying the *Heart* to this great Duty; and it is the Exerciſe of the *Heart* (as has been already

already ſhewn) that is truly and properly *a Praying by the Spirit*. On the contrary, in all Extempore-prayer, the Powers and Faculties of the Soul are called off from dealing with the *Heart*, and the Affections; and that both in the Speaker, and in the Hearer; both in him who makes, and in him who is to joyn in ſuch Prayers.

And firſt for the Miniſter, who makes and utters ſuch Extempore-prayers. He is wholly imploying his Invention, both to conceive Matter, and to find Words and Expreſſions to cloath it in: This is certainly the work, which takes up his *Mind*, in this Exerciſe: And ſince the Nature of man's Mind is ſuch, that it cannot with the ſame vigour, at the ſame time, attend the work of Invention, and that of raiſing the Affections alſo; nor meaſure out the ſame ſupply of Spirits and Intention for the carrying on the Operations of the *Head*, and thoſe of the *Heart* too; it is certain, that while the Head is ſo much imployed, the Heart muſt be idle, and very little imployed; and perhaps not at all: And conſequent-

ly, if, *to pray by the Spirit*, be to pray with the Heart, and the Affections; it is alſo as certain, that while a Man prays *Extempore*, he does *not pray by the Spirit*: Nay, the very truth of it is, that while he is ſo doing, he is not *praying* at all, but he is *ſtudying*; He is beating his *Brain*, while he ſhould be drawing out his *Affections*.

And then for the People, that are to hear, and joyn with him in ſuch Prayers; it is manifeſt, that they not knowing before-hand, what the Miniſter will ſay, muſt, as ſoon as they do hear him, preſently buſy and beſtirr their Minds both to apprehend and underſtand the meaning of what they hear; and withall, to judge, whether it be of ſuch a Nature, as to be fit for them, to joyn and concur with him *in*. So that the People alſo, are, by this Courſe, put to *ſtudy*, and to imploy their apprehending, and judging Faculties, while they ſhould be exerting their Affections, and Devotions; and conſequently, by this means, the *Spirit of Prayer is ſtinted*, as well in the Congregation,

gation, that follows, as in the Miniſter, who firſt conceives a Prayer after their Extempore-way. Which is a Truth ſo clear, and indeed ſelf-evident, that it is impoſſible, that it ſhould need any further Arguments to demonſtrate, or make it out.

The Sum of all is this; That ſince a Set-form of Prayer leaves the Soul wholly free, to imploy its Affections and Devotions, in which *the Spirit of Prayer* does moſt properly conſiſt; it follows, that *the Spirit of Prayer* is thereby, in a ſingular manner, helped, promoted, and enlarged: And ſince, on the other hand, the Extempore-way withdraws and takes off the Soul from imploying its *Affections*, and engages it chiefly, if not wholly, about the uſe of its Invention; it as plainly follows, that the *Spirit of Prayer* is by this means, unavoidably cramp'd and hindred, and (to uſe their own word) *ſtinted*: Which was the Propoſition that I undertook to prove. But there are two Things, I confeſs, that are extreamly *hindred* and *ſtinted* by

a Set-form of Prayer, and equally *furthered* and *enlarged* by the Extempore-way; which, without all doubt, is the true Cauſe, why the former is ſo much decried, and the latter ſo much extolled by the Men, whom we are now pleading with. The firſt of which is *Pride* and *Oſtentation*; the other *Faction* and *Sedition*.

1. And firſt for *Pride*. I do not in the leaſt queſtion, but the chief Deſign of ſuch as uſe the Extempore-way, is to amuſe *the unthinking Rabble* with an Admiration of their Gifts; their whole Devotion proceeding from no other principle, but only a *Love to hear themſelves talk*. And, I believe, it would put *Lucifer* himſelf hard to it, to out-vye the Pride of one of thoſe fellows pouring out his Extempore-ſtuff amongſt his ignorant, whining, factious Followers, liſtning to, and applauding his copious Flow and Cant, with the ridiculous Accents of their impertinent Groans. And, the truth is, Extempore-prayer, even when beſt and moſt dextrouſly performed, is nothing elſe, but a buſineſs of Invention and Wit (ſuch as it is)

is) and requires no more to it, but a teeming Imagination, a bold Front, and a ready Expreſſion; and deſerves much the ſame Commendation (were it not in a matter too *ſerious*, to be *ſuddain* upon) which is due to *Extempore* Verſes: only with this difference, That there is neceſſary to theſe latter a competent meaſure of Wit and Learning; whereas the former may be done with very little Wit, and no Learning at all.

And now, can any ſober perſon think it reaſonable, that the publick Devotions of a whole Congregation, ſhould be under the Conduct, and at the Mercy of a pert, empty, conceited *Holderforth*, whoſe chief (if not ſole) intent is to Vaunt his ſpiritual Clack, and (as I may ſo ſpeak) to *pray Prizes*; whereas Prayer is a Duty, that recommends it ſelf to the Acceptance of Almighty God, by no other Qualification ſo much, as by the profoundeſt Humility, and the loweſt Eſteem that a man can poſſibly have of himſelf?

Certainly the Extemporizing faculty is never more out of its Element, than in the

the Pulpit: Though even here, it is much more excuſable in a Sermon, than in a Prayer; For as much as in that, a Man addreſſes himſelf but to Men; Men like himſelf, whom he may therefore make bold with; as, no doubt, for ſo doing they will alſo make bold with him. Beſides, the peculiar advantage attending all ſuch ſuddain Conceptions, that, as they are quickly Born, ſo they quickly Die: It being ſeldom known, where the Speaker has ſo very *fluent* an *Invention*, but the Hearer alſo has the Gift of as *fluent* a *Memory*.

2*ly*. The other thing that has been hitherto ſo little befriended by a Set-form of *Prayer*, and ſo very much by the Extempore-way, is *Faction* and *Sedition*. It has been always found an Excellent way of girding at the Government in *Scripture-phraſe*. And we all know the Common Dialect, in which the great Maſters of this Art uſed to pray for the King, and which may juſtly paſs for only a cleanlier and more refined kind of Libelling him in *the Lord*. *As that God would turn his Heart*, and

and open his Eyes : As if he were a *Pagan*, yet to be converted to Chriſtianity; with many other ſly, virulent, and malicious Inſinuations, which we may every day hear of from (thoſe Mints of Treaſon and Rebellion) their Conventicles; and for which, and a great deal leſs, ſome Princes and Governments would make them not only eat their Words, but the Tongue that ſpoke them too. In fine, let all their Extempore Harangues be conſidered, and duly weighed, and you ſhall find a *Spirit* of Pride, Faction, and Sedition, predominant in them all: The only *Spirit*, which thoſe Impoſtors do really, and indeed, *pray by*.

I have been ſo much the longer, and the earneſter, againſt this intoxicating, bewitching Cheat of Extempore-prayer, being fully ſatisfied in my Conſcience, that it has been all along the Devil's Maſter-piece and prime Engine to overthrow our Church by. For I look upon this as a moſt unanſwerable Truth, That whatſoever renders the publick Worſhip of God contemptible amongſt us, muſt, in

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the ſame degree, weaken and diſcredit our whole Religion. And, I hope, I have alſo proved it to be a Truth altogether as clear, That this Extempore-way, naturally brings all the Contempt upon the Worſhip of God, that both the *Folly* and *Faction* of Men can poſſibly expoſe it to: And, therefore, as a thing neither ſubſervient to the true Purpoſes of Religion, nor grounded upon Principles of Reaſon, nor, laſtly, ſutable to the Practice of Antiquity, ought, by all means, to be exploded and caſt out of every ſober and well-ordered Church; or that will be ſure to throw the Church it ſelf out of Doors.

And thus I have at length finiſhed what I had to ſay of the firſt Ingredient of a Pious and Reverential Prayer, which was *Premeditation of Thought*, Preſcribed to us in theſe words, *Let not thy mouth be raſh, nor thy heart be haſty to utter any thing before God.* Which excellent Words, and moſt wiſe Advice of *Solomon*, whoſoever can reconcile to the Expediency, Decency, or Uſefulneſs of Extempore-prayer,

I ſhall

I ſhall acknowledge him a Man of greater Ability and Parts of Mind, than *Solomon* Himſelf.

The other Ingredient of a Reverential and duly qualifyed Prayer is *a pertinent Brevity of Expreſſion*, mentioned and recommended in that part of the Text; *Therefore let thy words be few.* But this I cannot diſpatch now, and therefore ſhall not enter upon at this time.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and One God, be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A Diſ-

A Diſcourſe againſt long and Extempore-Prayers,

In Behalf of the

LITURGY of the Church of *ENGLAND*,

Upon the ſame *Text*.

ECCLES. V. 2.

Be not raſh with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be haſty to utter any thing before God: for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth; therefore let thy words be few.

I Formerly began a Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, and obſerved in them theſe three Things.

1. That

1. That whoſoever appears in the Houſe of God, and particularly in the way of Prayer, ought to reckon himſelf, in a more eſpecial manner, placed in the ſight and preſence of God: And,

2*ly*. That the vaſt and infinite Diſtance between God and Him, ought to create in him all imaginable Awe and Reverence in ſuch his Addreſſes to God.

3*ly*. and *Laſtly*; That this Reverence required of him, is to conſiſt in a ſerious preparation of his Thoughts, and a ſober government of his Expreſſions: Neither is his *mouth to be raſh, nor his heart to be haſty in uttering any thing before God*; but his *Words to be few*.

Theſe three Things I ſhew, were evidently contained in the Words, and did as evidently contain the whole Senſe of them. But I gathered them all into this one Propoſition; Namely,

That Premeditation of Thought, and Brevity of Expreſſion, are the great Ingredients of that Reverence, that is required to a pious, acceptable, and devout Prayer.

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The firſt of theſe, which is *Premeditation of Thought*, I then fully treated of, and diſpatched; and ſhall now proceed to the other, which is a *pertinent Brevity of Expreſſion*; *Therefore let thy words be few.*

Concerning which, we ſhall obſerve, firſt in general, That to be able to expreſs our Minds briefly, and fully too, is abſolutely the greateſt Perfection and commendation that Speech is capable of; ſuch a mutual communication of our Thoughts, being (as I may ſo ſpeak) the next approach to *Intuition*; and the neareſt Imitation of the Converſe of bleſſed *Spirits made perfect*, that our Condition in this World can poſſibly raiſe us to. Certainly the greateſt and the wiſeſt Conceptions, that ever iſſued from the Mind of Man, have been couched under, and delivered in a few, cloſe, home, and ſignificant Words.

But to derive the Credit of this way of ſpeaking much higher, and from an Example infinitely greater, than the greateſt humane Wiſdom, was it not authorized, and ennobled by God himſelf in his

making of the World? Was not the Work, of all the ſix days, tranſacted in ſo many Words? There was no Circumlocution, or Amplification, in the Caſe; which makes the Rhetorician *Longinus*, in his Book *of the Loftineſs of Speech*, ſo much admire the Height and Grandeur of *Moſes's* Style in his firſt Chapter of *Geneſis*, Ὁ παρ' Ἰουδαίοις θεσμοθέτης, οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνήρ. The Law-giver of the *Jews* (ſays he, meaning *Moſes*) was no ordinary Man, ἐπειδὴ πρὸ τῆς θείας δυνάμεως καὶ πρὸ ἀξίας ἐνεφάνισε καταξιφήνεν, becauſe (ſays he) he ſet forth the Divine Power ſutably to the Majeſty and Greatneſs of it. But how did he this? Why, οὐδὲν ἐν τῇ εἰσβολῇ γράψας παρὰ νόμων, εἶπεν ὁ Θεὸς φησὶ, τί; γενέσθω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο, γενέσθω γῆ καὶ ἐγένετο, &c. For that (*ſays he*) in the very Entrance of his Laws, he gives us this ſhort and preſent Account of the whole Creation: God ſaid, *Let there be Light, and there was Light; Let there be an Earth, a Sea, and a Firmament, and there was ſo.* So that all this high Elogy and Encomium, given by this Heathen of *Moſes*, ſprang only from the Ma-

jeſtick

jeſtick Brevity of this one Expreſſion; an Expreſſion ſo ſuted to the Greatneſs of a Creator, and ſo Expreſſive of his boundleſs, creative Power, as a Power infinitely above all Controll, or poſſibility of finding the leaſt obſtacle or delay, in atchieving its mightieſt, and moſt ſtupendious Works. Heaven, and Earth, and all the Hoſt of both (as it were) dropt from his Mouth; and Nature it ſelf was but the product of a Word; a Word, not deſigned to Expreſs, but to Conſtitute and give a Being; and not ſo much the Repreſentation, as the Cauſe of what it ſignified.

This was God's way of ſpeaking in his firſt forming of the Univerſe: And was it not ſo, in the next grand Inſtance of his Power, his Governing of it too? For are not the great Inſtruments of Government, his Laws, drawn up and digeſted into a few Sentences? the whole Body of them containing but Ten Commandments, and ſome of thoſe Commandments, not ſo many words? Nay, and have we not theſe alſo brought into yet a

narrower Compaſs by him, who beſt underſtood them? *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* Precepts, nothing like the Tedious, Endleſs, Confuſed Traſh of Humane Laws; Laws ſo numerous, that they not only exceed men's Practice, but alſo ſurpaſs their Arithmetick; and ſo voluminous, that no mortal Head nor Shoulders neither, muſt ever pretend themſelves able to *bear* them. In God's Laws the Words are few, the Senſe vaſt, and infinite. In Humane Laws, you ſhall be ſure to have Words enough; but, for the moſt part, to diſcern the Senſe and Reaſon of them, you had need read them with a Microſcope.

And thus having ſhewn, how the Almighty utters himſelf, when he ſpeaks, and that upon the greateſt Occaſions; let us now deſcend from Heaven to Earth, from God to Man, and ſhew, That it is no preſumption for us to Conform our Words, as well as our Actions, to the ſupreme Pattern, and according to our poor meaſures to imitate the Wiſdom

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that we adore. And for this, has it not been noted by the beſt Obſervers, and the ableſt Judges, both of Things and Perſons, that the Wiſdom of any People or Nation has been moſt ſeen in the Proverbs and ſhort Sayings commonly received amongſt them? And what is a Proverb, but the Experience and Obſervation of ſeveral Ages, gathered and ſumm'd up into one Expreſſion? The Scripture vouches *Solomon* for the *wiſeſt of Men*, and they are his *Proverbs* that prove him ſo. The Seven Wiſe men of *Greece*, ſo famous for their Wiſdom all the World over, acquired all that Fame each of them, by a ſingle Sentence, conſiſting of two or three Words. And γνῶθι σεαυτὸν ſtill lives and flouriſhes in the Mouths of all, while many vaſt Volumes are extinct, and ſunk into Duſt, and utter Oblivion. And then, for Books; we ſhall generally find, that the moſt Excellent, in any Art or Science, have been ſtill the ſmalleſt, and moſt compendious: And this not without ground; for it is an Argument that the Author was a Maſter of

what he wrote; and had a clear Notion, and a full Comprehenſion of the Subject before him. For the *Reaſon* of Things lies in a little compaſs, if the Mind could at any time, be ſo happy as to light upon it. Moſt of the Writings and Diſcourſes in the World, are but Illuſtration, and Rhetorick, which ſignifies as much as nothing to a Mind eager in purſuit after the Cauſes and Philoſophical Truth of Things. It is the work of Fancy to *enlarge*, but of Judgment to *ſhorten* and *contract*; and therefore this muſt needs be as far above the other, as Judgment is a greater and a nobler Faculty than Fancy or Imagination. All Philoſophy is reduced to a few Principles, and thoſe Principles comprized in a few Propoſitions. And as the whole Structure of *Speculation* reſts upon three or four Axioms, or Maxims; ſo that of Practice alſo bears upon a very ſmall number of Rules. And ſurely, there was never yet any *Rule* or *Maxim* that filled a Volume, or took up a Week's time to be got by Heart. No; theſe are the *Apices Rerum*, the Tops and Summs, the

the very Spirit and Life of Things extracted and abridged; juſt as all the Lines drawn from the vaſteſt Circumference, doe at length meet and unite in the ſmalleſt of things, a *Point*; and it is but a very little piece of Wood, with which a true Artiſt will meaſure all the Timber in the World. The Truth is, there could be no ſuch thing as Art or Science, could not the Mind of Man gather the general Natures of Things out of the numberleſs heap of Particulars, and then bind them up into ſuch ſhort Aphoriſms or Propoſitions; that ſo they may be made portable to the Memory, and thereby become ready and at hand, for the Judgment to apply, and make uſe of, as there ſhall be occaſion.

In fine, Brevity, and Succinctneſs of Speech, is that, which in Philoſophy or Speculation we call *Maxim*, and Firſt Principle; in the Counſels and Reſolves of Practical Wiſdom, and the deep Myſteries of Religion, *Oracle*; and laſtly, in matters of Wit, and the fineneſſes of Imagination, *Epigram*. All of them ſe-

verally, and in their kinds the greateſt, and the nobleſt things that the Mind of Man can ſhew the force and dexterity of its Faculties in.

And now, if this be the higheſt Excellency, and perfection of Speech, in all other things, can we aſſign any true, ſolid Reaſon, why it ſhould not be ſo likewiſe in Prayer? Nay, is there not rather the cleareſt Reaſon imaginable, why it ſhould be much more ſo? Since moſt of the fore-mentioned things are but Addreſſes to an Humane Underſtanding, which may need as many Words as may fill a Volume, to make it underſtand the Truth of one Line. Whereas Prayer is an Addreſs to that Eternal Mind, which (as we have ſhewn before) ſuch as rationally Invocate, pretend not to Inform. Nevertheleſs, ſince the Nature of Man is ſuch, that while we are yet in the Body, our Reverence and Worſhip of God muſt of Neceſſity proceed in ſome Analogy to the Reverence, that we ſhew to the Grandees of this World, we will here ſee, what the judgment of all Wiſe men is, concern-

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ing fewneſs of Words, when we appear as Suppliants before our Earthly Superiors; and we ſhall find, that they generally allow it to import theſe three Things: 1. *Modeſty*. 2. *Diſcretion*; And 3*ly*. Height of *Reſpect to the Perſon addreſſed to*. And firſt, for *Modeſty*. Modeſty is a kind of ſhame, or baſhfulneſs, proceeding from the ſenſe a Man has of his own defects, compared with the Perfections of Him whom he comes before. And that which is Modeſty towards Men, is Worſhip and Devotion towards God. It is a Vertue, that makes a Man unwilling to be ſeen, and fearfull to be heard; and yet for that very Cauſe, never fails to make him, both ſeen with Favour, and heard with Attention. It loves not many words, nor indeed needs them. For Modeſty addreſſing to any one of a generous Worth and Honour, is ſure to have that man's Honour for its Advocate, and his Generoſity for its Interceſſor. And how then is it poſſible for ſuch a Vertue to run out into Words! Loquacity ſtorms the Ear, but Modeſty takes

takes the Heart; that is Troubleſome, this Gentle, but Irreſiſtible. Much Speaking is always the Effect of Confidence; and Confidence ſtill pre-ſuppoſes, and ſprings from the Perſwaſion that a Man has of his own Worth: both of them, certainly, very unfit Qualifications for a Petitioner.

2*ly*. The ſecond Thing that naturally ſhews it ſelf in Paucity of Words, is *Diſcretion*; and particularly, that prime and eminent part of it, that conſiſts in a Care of offending: Which *Solomon* aſſures us, that in much Speaking, it is hardly poſſible for us to avoid: in *Prov.* 10. 19. *In the multitude of Words* (ſays He) *there wanteth not ſin*. It requiring no ordinary Skill for a Man to make his Tongue run by Rule; and, at the ſame time, to give it both its Leſſon, and its Liberty too. For ſeldom, or never, is there much ſpoke, but ſomething or other had better been not ſpoke; there being nothing that the Mind of Man is ſo apt to kindle, and take diſtaſt at, as at Words: And therefore, whenſoever any one

one comes to preferr a Suit to another, no doubt, the fewer of them the better; ſince, where ſo very little is ſaid, it is ſure to be either Candidly *accepted*, or, which is next, Eaſily *excuſed*: But at the ſame time, to Petition, and to Provoke too, is certainly very prepoſterous.

3*ly*. The third Thing, that *Brevity of Speech* commends it ſelf by, in all Petitionary Addreſſes, is a peculiar reſpect to the Perſon addreſſed to: For, whoſoever Petitions his Superior, in ſuch a manner, does, by his very ſo doing, confeſs him better able to underſtand, than he himſelf can be to expreſs his own Caſe. He owns him, as a Patron, of a preventing Judgment and Goodneſs, and, upon that account, able, not only to Anſwer, but alſo to Anticipate his Requeſts. For, according to the moſt Natural Interpretation of Things, this is to aſcribe to him a Sagacity ſo quick, and piercing, that it were Preſumption to inform; and a Benignity ſo great, that it were needleſs to importune him. And can there be a greater, and more winning Deference to a Superior,

Superior, than to treat him under ſuch a Character? Or, can any thing be imagin'd, ſo naturally fit and efficacious, both to inforce the Petition, and to endear the Petitioner? A ſhort Petition to a Great Man, is not only a Suit to him for his Favour, but alſo a Panegyrick upon his Parts.

And thus I have given you the Three Commendatory Qualifications of Brevity of Speech, in our Applications to the Great Ones of the World. Concerning which, as I ſhewed before, That it was Impoſſible for us to form our Addreſſes, even to God himſelf, but with ſome Proportion and Reſemblance to thoſe that we make to our fellow Mortals, in a Condition much above us; ſo it is certain, That whatſoever the general Judgment and Conſent of Mankind allows to be Expreſſive and Declarative of our Honour to thoſe, muſt (only with due allowance of the Difference of the Object) as really and properly declare and ſignify that Honour and Adoration that is due from us to the Great God. And conſe-

quently,

quently, what we have ſaid for Brevity of Speech, with Reſpect to the former, ought equally to conclude for it, with Relation to him too.

But to argue more immediately, and directly to the Point before us. I ſhall now produce five Arguments, enforcing Brevity, and caſhiering all Prolixity of Speech, with peculiar Reference to our Addreſſes to God.

1. And the firſt Argument ſhall be taken from this Conſideration: *That there is no Reaſon allegeable for the Uſe of Length, or Prolixity of Speech, that is at all applicable to Prayer.* For, whoſoever uſes Multiplicity of Words, or Length of Diſcourſe, muſt of neceſſity doe it for one of theſe three Purpoſes; Either to *inform*, or *perſwade*; or, laſtly, to *weary* and *overcome* the perſon, whom he directs his Diſcourſe to. But the very firſt foundation, of what I had to ſay upon this Subject, was laid by me, in demonſtrating, That Prayer could not poſſibly prevail with God, any of theſe three ways. For as much as being Omniſcient, he could not

not be Informed; and, being void of Paſſion, or Affections, he could not be perſwaded; and, laſtly, being Omnipotent, and infinitely Great, he could not, by any Importunity, be wearied, or overcome. And, if ſo, what uſe then can there be of Rhetorick, Harangue, or Multitude of Words in Prayer? For, if they ſhould be deſigned for Information, muſt it not be infinitely ſottiſh, and unreaſonable, to go about to inform him, who can be ignorant of Nothing? Or, to perſwade him, whoſe unchangeable Nature makes it Impoſſible for him to be moved, or wrought upon? Or, laſtly, by long and much ſpeaking, to think to weary him out, whoſe Infinite Power, all the ſtrength of Men and Angels, and the whole World put together, is not able to encounter, or ſtand before? So that the truth is, by Loquacity and Prolixity of Prayer, a Man does really and indeed (whether he thinks ſo or no) rob God of the Honour of thoſe three great Attributes, and neither treats Him as a perſon Omniſcient, or Unchangeable, or Omnipotent. For, on the

other

other ſide, all the uſefulneſs of long Speech, in Humane Converſe, is founded only upon the Defects and Imperfections of Humane Nature. For he, whoſe Knowledge is at beſt but limited, and whoſe Intellect, both in apprehending and judging, proceeds by a ſmall diminutive Light, cannot but receive an additional Light, by the Conceptions of another Man, clearly and plainly expreſſed, and by ſuch Expreſſion conveyed to his Apprehenſion. And He again, whoſe Nature ſubjects him to Want and Weakneſs, and conſequently to Hopes and Fears, cannot but be moved this way, or that way, according as Objects ſutable to thoſe Paſſions, ſhall be dextrouſly repreſented, and ſet before his Imagination, by the Arts of Speaking; which is that, that we call *Perſwaſion*. And laſtly, He, whoſe Soul and Body receive their Activity from, and perform all their Functions by, the Mediation of the Spirits, which ebb and flow, conſume, and are renewed again, cannot but find himſelf very uneaſy upon any tedious, verboſe Application

cation made to him: and that ſometimes to ſuch a degree, that through meer Fatigue, and even againſt Judgment and Intereſt both, a man ſhall ſurrender himſelf as a conquer'd perſon, to the over-bearing Vehemence of ſuch Sollicitations: For when they ply him ſo faſt, and pour in upon him ſo thick, they cannot but wear, and waſt the Spirits, as unequal to ſo pertinacious a Charge; and this is properly to weary a man. But now all Wearineſs, we know, pre-ſuppoſes Weakneſs; and conſequently, every long, importune, wearifome Petition, is truly and properly a force upon him, who is purſued with it; it is a following Blow after Blow upon the Mind and Affections, and may, for the time, paſs for a real, though ſhort, Perſecution.

This is the State and Condition of Humane Nature; and Prolixity, or Importunity of Speech, is ſtill the great Engine to attack it by, either in its *blind* or *weak* ſide: And I think I may venture to affirm, That it is ſeldom, that any man is prevailed upon by Words, but upon

a True

a True and Philoſophical eſtimate of the whole matter, he is either *deceived*, or *wearied*, before he is ſo; and parts with the thing deſired of him upon the very ſame terms, that either a Child parts with a Jewel for an Apple, or a Man parts with his Sword, when it is forceably wreſted, or took from him. And that he who obtains, what he has been Rhetorically, or Importunately begging for, goes away really a Conquerer, and Triumphantly carrying off the Spoils of his Neighbour's Underſtanding, or his Will; baffling the former, or wearying the latter into a grant of his reſtleſs Petitions.

And now, if this be the Caſe; when any one comes with a tedious, long-winded Harangue to God, may not God properly anſwer him with thoſe words, in *Pſal.* 50. 21. *Surely thou thinkeſt, I am altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf?* And perhaps, upon a due, and rational Examination of all the Follies, and Indecencies, that Men are apt to be guilty of in Prayer, they will be all found reſolvable into this one Thing, as the true and ſole Cauſe of

them; namely, *That Men, when they pray, take God to be ſuch an one as themſelves*; and ſo treat him accordingly. The malignity and miſchief of which groſs miſtake, may reach farther, than poſſibly at firſt they can well be aware of. For if it be Idolatry to pray to God the Father, repreſented under the ſhape of a Man, can it be at all better, to pray to him as repreſented under the weakneſs of a Man? Nay, if the miſrepreſentation of the Object makes the Idolatry; certainly, by how much the worſe, and more ſcandalous the Miſrepreſentation is, by ſo much the groſſer, and more intolerable, muſt be the Idolatry. To confirm which, we may add this Conſideration, That Chriſt himſelf, even now in his glorified Eſtate in Heaven, wears the Body, and conſequently the Shape of a Man, though he is far from any of his Infirmities, or Imperfections: And therefore, no doubt, to repreſent God to our ſelves under theſe latter, muſt needs be more Abſurd, and Irreligious, than to repreſent him under the former. But to one Particular of the

preceding

preceding Diſcourſe, ſome may reply and object; That if God's Omniſcience, by rendring it impoſſible for him to be Informed, be a ſufficient Reaſon againſt Prolixity, or length of Prayer; it will follow, That it is equally a Reaſon againſt the uſing any Words at all in Prayer; ſince the proper uſe of Words is to inform the perſon whom we ſpeak to; and conſequently, where Information is impoſſible, Words muſt needs be uſeleſs and ſuperfluous.

To which I anſwer, Firſt by Conceſſion, That if the *ſole* uſe of Words, or Speech, were to *inform the Perſon, whom we ſpeak to*, the Conſequence would be firm and good, and equally conclude againſt the uſe of any Words at all in Prayer. But therefore, in the ſecond place, I deny Information to be the ſole and adequate uſe of Words, or Speech, or indeed any uſe of them at all, when either the perſon ſpoken to, needs not to be informed, and withall, is known not to need it, as ſometimes it falls out with Men, or, when he is uncapable of being informed,

as it is always with God. But the proper uſe of Words, whenſoever we ſpeak to God in Prayer, is thereby to pay Him *Honour* and *Obedience*. God having, by an expreſs Precept, enjoyned us the uſe of Words in Prayer, Commanding us in *Pſal.* 50. 15. and many other Scriptures, *to call upon him*: and in *Luk.* 11. 21. *When we pray, to ſay, Our Father*, &c. But no where has he Commanded us to doe this with Prolixity, or Multiplicity of Words. And though, it muſt be confeſſed, that we may ſometimes anſwer this Command, of calling upon *God*, and ſaying, *Our Father*, &c. by mental or inward Prayer; yet ſince theſe Words, in their firſt and moſt proper ſignification, import a vocal Addreſs, there is no doubt, but the direct deſign of the Command is to enjoyn this alſo, whereſoever there is ability and power to perform it. So that we ſee here the Neceſſity of *vocal Prayer*, founded upon the Authority of a Divine Precept; whereas, for *long Prolix Prayer*, no ſuch Precept can be produced; and conſequently, the Divine Omniſcience may be a ſufficient

ſufficient Reaſon againſt Multiplicity of Words in Prayer, and yet conclude nothing ſimply or abſolutely againſt the bare uſe of them. Nevertheleſs, that we may not ſeem to alledge bare Command, unſeconded by Reaſon, (which yet, in the Divine Commands, it is impoſſible to doe,) there is this great Reaſon for, and uſe of Words in Prayer, without the leaſt pretence of Informing the perſon whom we pray to; and that is, to *acknowledge and own thoſe wants* before God, that we ſupplicate for a Relief of. It being very proper and rational, to own and acknowledge a thing even to him, who knew it before: For as much as this is ſo far from offering to communicate, or make known to him the thing ſo acknowledged, that it rather pre-ſuppoſes in him an Antecedent knowledge of it, and comes in only as a ſubſequent Aſſent, and ſubſcription to the Reality and Truth of ſuch a Knowledge. For to *acknowledge* a thing in the firſt ſenſe of the word, does by no means ſignify a deſign of Notifying that thing to another, but is truly and

properly a man's paſſing Sentence upon himſelf, and his own Condition: There being no reaſon in the World, for a Man to expect that God ſhould relieve, and ſupply thoſe Wants, that he himſelf will not own, nor take notice of; any more, than for a Man to hope for a pardon of thoſe Sins, that he cannot find in his heart to confeſs. And yet (I ſuppoſe) no Man in his right Senſes, does, or can imagine, that God is informed, or brought to the knowledge of thoſe Sins, by any ſuch Confeſſion.

And ſo much for the clearing of this Objection; And, in the whole, for the firſt Argument produced by us, *for Brevity, and againſt Prolixity* of Prayer; namely, *That all the Reaſons that can be aſſigned for Prolixity of Speech in our Converſe with Men, ceaſe, and become no Reaſons for it at all, when we are to ſpeak or pray to God.*

2*ly*. The ſecond Argument for *Paucity of Words* in Prayer, ſhall be taken from the *Paucity* of *thoſe things* that are Neceſſary to be prayed for. And ſurely, where few Things are neceſſary, few Words ſhould

ſhould be ſufficient. For where the *Matter* is not Commenſurate to the Words, all Speaking is but Tautology; that being truly and really Tautology, where the ſame thing is repeated, though under never ſo much variety of Expreſſion; As it is but the ſame Man ſtill, though he appears every day, or every hour, in a new and different Sute of Clothes.

The adequate Subject of our Prayers (I ſhew'd at firſt) comprehended in it *Things of Neceſſity*, and *Things of Charity*. As to the firſt of which, I know nothing abſolutely neceſſary, but *Grace* here, and *Glory* hereafter. And for the other, we know what the Apoſtle ſays, 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Nature is ſatisfied with a little, and Grace with leſs. And now, if the Matter of our Prayers lies within ſo narrow a compaſs, why ſhould the Dreſs and Outſide of them ſpread and diffuſe it ſelf into ſo wide and diſproportioned a largeneſs? By reaſon of which, our Words will be forced to hang looſe and light, without any Matter to ſupport them; much after

the ſame rate, that it is ſaid to be in Tranſubſtantiation; where *Accidents* are left in the lurch by their proper *Subject*, that gives them the ſlip, and ſo leaves thoſe poor ſlender Beings to uphold and ſhift for themſelves.

In Brevity of Speech, a Man does not ſo much ſpeak Words, as Things; Things in their preciſe and naked Truth; and ſtripp'd of their Rhetorical Mask, and their Fallacious Gloſs: And therefore, in *Athens*, they circumſcribed the Pleadings of their Orators by a ſtrict Law, cutting off Prologues and Epilogues, and Commanding them to an immediate Repreſentation of the Caſe, by an impartial and ſuccinct Declaration of meer Matter of Fact. And this was, indeed, to ſpeak Things fit for a Judge to hear, becauſe it argued the Pleader alſo a Judge of what was fit for him to ſpeak.

And now, why ſhould not this be both Decency and Devotion too, when we come to plead for our poor Souls before the great Tribunal of Heaven? It was the Saying of *Solomon*, *A Word to the Wiſe*; and

and if ſo, certainly there can be no neceſſity of many Words to Him, who is Wiſdom it ſelf. For, can any man think, that God delights to hear him make Speeches, and to ſhew his Parts, (as the word is) or to jumble a multitude of miſapplied Scripture-ſentences together, interlarded with a frequent, nauſeous Repetition of *Ah Lord!* which ſome call *exerciſing their Gifts*, but with a greater exerciſe of their Hearers patience? Nay, does not he preſent his Maker, not only with a more decent, but alſo a more free and liberal Oblation, who tenders him much in a little, and brings him his whole Heart and Soul wrapt up in three or four words, than he who with full Mouth, and loud Lungs, ſends up whole Vollies of Articulate Breath to the Throne of Grace? For neither in the eſteem of God, or Man, ought multitude of Words to paſs for any more: In the preſent Caſe, no doubt, God accounts and accepts of the former, as infinitely a more valuable Offering than the latter. As that Subject pays his Prince a much nobler and more

more acceptable Tribute, who tenders him a Purſe of Gold, than he who brings him a whole Cart-load of Farthings; in which, there is Weight without Worth, and Number without Account.

3*ly*. The third Argument for Brevity, or Contractedneſs of Speech in Prayer, ſhall be taken from the very Nature and Condition of the perſon who prays; which makes it impoſſible for him to keep up the ſame fervour and attention in a long Prayer, that he may in a ſhort. For as I firſt obſerved that the Mind of Man cannot with the ſame force and vigour attend to ſeveral Objects at the ſame time; ſo neither can it with the ſame force and earneſtneſs exert it ſelf upon one and the ſame Object for any long time. Great Intention of Mind ſpending the Spirits too faſt, to continue its firſt freſhneſs and agility long. For while the Soul is a Retainer to the Elements, and a Sojourner in the Body, it muſt be content to ſubmit its own quickneſs and ſpirituality to the dullneſs of its Vehicle, and to comply with the pace of its inferiour Companion.

Juſt

Juſt like a Man ſhut up in a Coach; who, while he is ſo, muſt be willing to go no faſter than the Motion of the Coach will carry him. He who does all by the help of thoſe ſubtile, refin'd parts of Matter, called Spirits, muſt not think to perſevere at the ſame pitch of acting, while thoſe Principles of Activity flag. No man begins and ends a long Journey with the ſame pace.

But now, when Prayer has loſt its due fervour, and attention, (which indeed are the very Vitals of it,) it is but the *Carcaſe* of a Prayer; and conſequently, muſt needs be loathſome and offenſive to God: Nay, though the greateſt part of it ſhould be enlivened, and carried on with an Actual Attention; yet if that Attention fails to enliven any one part of it, the whole is but a joyning of the *Living* and the *Dead* together; for which Conjunction, the *Dead* is not at all the better, but the *Living* very much the worſe. It is not length, nor copiouſneſs of Language, that is Devotion, any more than Bulk and Bigneſs is Valour, or *Fleſh* the meaſure

ſure of the *Spirit*. A ſhort Sentence may be oftentimes a large and a mighty Prayer. Devotion ſo managed, being like Water in a Well; where you have fullneſs in a little compaſs; which ſurely is much nobler, than the ſame carried out into many petit, creeping Rivulets, with *length* and *ſhallowneſs* together. Let him who prays, beſtow all that ſtrength, fervour, and attention, upon Shortneſs and Significance, that would otherwiſe run out, and loſe it ſelf in Length and Luxuriancy of Speech to no purpoſe. Let not his Tongue out-ſtrip his Heart; nor preſume to carry a Meſſage to the Throne of Grace, while that ſtays behind. Let him not think to ſupport ſo hard, and weighty a Duty, with a tired, languiſhing, and be-jaded Devotion: To avoid which, let a Man contract his Expreſſion, where he cannot enlarge his Affection; ſtill remembring, that nothing can be more abſurd in it ſelf, nor more unacceptable to God, than for one engaged in the great Work of Prayer, to hold on *ſpeaking*, after he has left off *praying*;

and

and to keep the *lips* at work, when the *ſpirit* can do no more.

4*ly*. The fourth Argument for ſhortneſs, or conciſeneſs of Speech in Prayer, ſhall be drawn from this, That it is the moſt natural and lively way of expreſſing the utmoſt Agonies and Out-cries of the Soul to God upon a quick, pungent ſenſe, either of a preſſing Neceſſity, or an approaching Calamity; which, we know, are generally the chief Occaſions of Prayer, and the moſt effectual Motives to bring Men upon their Knees, in a vigorous Application of themſelves, to this great Duty. A perſon ready to ſink under his Wants, has neither time, nor heart, to Rhetoricate, or make Flouriſhes. No Man begins a long Grace, when he is ready to ſtarve: Such an one's Prayers are like the Relief he needs, quick and ſuddain, ſhort and immediate: He is like a Man in Torture upon the Rack; whoſe Pains are too acute to let his Words be many; and whoſe Deſires of Deliverance too impatient, to delay the things he begs for, by the manner of his begging it.

It

It is a Common Saying; *If a Man does not know how to Pray, let him go to Sea, and that will teach him.* And we have a notable Inſtance of what kind of prayers Men are taught in that School, even in the Diſciples themſelves, when a Storm aroſe, and the Sea raged, and the Ship was ready to be caſt away, in the 8*th* of *Matthew*. In which Caſe, we doe not find that they fell preſently to harangue it about Seas and Winds, and that diſmal face of things, that muſt needs appear all over the devouring Element at ſuch a time: All which, and the like, might, no doubt, have been very plentifull Topicks of Eloquence to a Man, who ſhould have lookt upon theſe things from the Shoar; or diſcourſed of Wrecks and Tempeſts ſafe and warm in his Parlour. But theſe poor Wretches, who were now entring (as they thought) into the very Jaws of Death, and ſtruggling with the laſt Efforts of Nature, upon the Senſe of a departing Life; and conſequently, could neither ſpeak, nor think, any thing low or ordinary in ſuch a Condition, preſently

ſently rallied up, and diſcharged the whole Concern of their deſponding Souls, in that ſhort Prayer, of but three words, though much fuller, and more forcible, than one of three thouſand, in the 25th. Verſe of the fore-mentioned Chapter; *Save us, Lord, or we periſh.* Death makes ſhort work when it comes, and will teach him, who would prevent it, to make ſhorter. For ſurely no Man, who thinks himſelf juſt a periſhing, can be at leiſure to be Eloquent; or judge it either Senſe, or Devotion, to begin a long Prayer, when, in all likelihood, he ſhall conclude his Life before it.

5*ly*. The fifth and laſt Argument that I ſhall produce for *Brevity of Speech*, or *Fewneſs of Words* in Prayer, ſhall be taken from the Examples which we find in Scripture, of ſuch as have been remarkable for *Brevity*, and of ſuch as have been noted for *Prolixity of Speech*, in the diſcharge of this Duty.

1. And firſt for *Brevity*. To omit all thoſe notable Examples, which the Old Teſtament affords us of it; and to con-

fine

fine our ſelves only to the New, in which we are undoubtedly moſt concerned; Was not this way of Praying, not only Warranted, but Sanctified, and ſet above all that the Wit of Man could poſſibly except againſt it, by that infinitely exact Form of Prayer, preſcribed by the Greateſt, the Holieſt, and the Wiſeſt Man, that ever lived, even Chriſt himſelf, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World? Was it not an inſtance both of the trueſt Devotion, and the fulleſt and moſt comprehenſive Reaſon, that ever proceeded from the Mouth of Man? And yet withall, the ſhorteſt, and moſt ſuccinct Model, that ever graſped all the Needs and Occaſions of Mankind, both Spiritual and Temporal; into ſo ſmall a compaſs? Doubtleſs, had our Saviour thought fit to amplifie, or be prolix, *He, in whom were hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom*, could not want Matter; nor he who was himſelf *the Word*, want Variety of the fitteſt to have expreſſed his Mind by. But He choſe rather to contract the whole Concern of both Worlds into a few Lines, and

and to unite both Heaven and Earth in his Prayer, as he had done before in his Perſon. And indeed one was a kind of Copy, or Repreſentation, of the other.

So then, we ſee here Brevity in the *Rule* or *Pattern*, let us ſee it next in the *Practice*, and after that, in the *Succeſs* of Prayer. And firſt; we have the Practice, as well as the Pattern of it, in our Saviour himſelf; and that, in the moſt ſignal paſſage of his whole Life, even his Preparation for his approaching Death. In which dolorous Scene, when his whole Soul was nothing but Sorrow, (that great moving Spring of Invention and Elocution,) and when Nature was put to its laſt and utmoſt ſtretch, and ſo had no refuge, or relief, but in Prayer; yet even then, all this Horror, Agony, and Diſtreſs of Spirit, delivers it ſelf but in two very ſhort Sentences, in *Matth.* 26. 39. *O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* And again, the ſecond time, with the like Brevity, and the like Words. *O my Father, if this Cup may not*

paſs from me, except I drink it, thy Will be done. And laſtly, the third time alſo, he uſed the ſame ſhort form again; and yet in all this he was, (as we may ſay without a Metaphor) even praying *for Life*; ſo far as the great buſineſs, he was then about, to wit, the Redemption of the World, would ſuffer him to pray for it. All which Prayers of our Saviour, and others of like Brevity, are properly ſuch, as we call *Ejaculations*; an elegant Similitude from a Dart, or Arrow, ſhot, or thrown out; and ſuch an one (we know) of a Yard long, will fly farther, and ſtrike deeper, than one of Twenty.

And then, in the laſt place, for the Succeſs of ſuch brief Prayers; I ſhall give you but three Inſtances of this, but they ſhall be of Perſons praying under the Preſſure of as great Miſeries, as humane Nature could well be afflicted with. And the firſt ſhall be of the Leper, *Matth.* 8. 2. or, as St. *Luke* deſcribes him, *a Man full of Leproſie, who came to our Saviour and Worſhipped him*; and, as St. *Luke* again has it more particularly, *fell on his face before*

before him, (which is the loweſt, and moſt devout of all Poſtures of Worſhip,) *ſaying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canſt make me clean.* This was all his Prayer: And the Anſwer to it was, That he was immediately cleanſed. The next Inſtance ſhall be of the poor *blind Man*, in *Luke* 18. 28. following our Saviour with this earneſt Prayer: *Jeſus, thou Son of David, have Mercy upon me.* His whole Prayer was no more: For it is ſaid in the next *verſe*, that he went on, repeating it again and again: *Jeſus, thou Son of David, have Mercy upon me.* And the Anſwer he received was, That his Eyes were opened, and his Sight reſtored.

The third and laſt Inſtance ſhall be of the *Publican*, in the ſame Chapter of St. *Luke*; praying under a lively ſenſe of as great a Leproſie, and Blindneſs of Soul, as the other two could have of Body: in the 13th. Verſe, *He ſmote upon his Breaſt, ſaying, God be mercifull to me a ſinner.* He ſpoke no more; though 'tis ſaid in the 10th. *Verſe*, that he went *ſolemnly and purpoſely up to the Temple to pray*: The iſſue and ſucceſs

of which Prayer, was, *That he went home juſtified*, before one of thoſe, whom all the *Jewiſh* Church revered as abſolutely the higheſt and moſt heroick Examples of Piety, and moſt beloved Favourites of Heaven, in the whole World. And now, if the force and vertue of theſe ſhort Prayers could riſe ſo high, as *to cleanſe a Leper, to give ſight to the Blind, and to juſtify a Publican*; and, if the Worth of a Prayer may at all be meaſured by the Succeſs of it, I ſuppoſe, no Prayers whatſoever can do more; and, I never yet heard or read of any *long Prayer*, that did ſo much. Which brings on the other part of this our fifth and laſt Argument, which was to be drawn from the Examples of ſuch, as have been noted in Scripture for Prolixity, or Length of Prayer. And of this, there are only two mentioned; *The Heathens, and the Phariſees.* The firſt, the grand Inſtance of *Idolatry*; the other, of *Hypocriſy*: But Chriſt forbids us the Imitation of both; *When ye pray*, ſays our Saviour in the 6th. of *Matthew*, *be ye not like the Heathens*: But in what? Why,

Why, in this, *That they think they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking*; in the 7th. *Verſe*. It is not the Multitude, that prevails in Armies, and much leſs in Words. And then for the *Phariſees*, whom our Saviour repreſents, as the very vileſt of Men, and the greateſt of Cheats. We have them amuſing the World with pretences of a more refin'd Devotion, while their Heart was all that time in their Neighbour's Coffers. For, does not our Saviour expreſsly tell us, in *Luke* 20. and the two laſt Verſes, That the great Tools, the Hooks or Engines by which they compaſs'd their worſt, their wickedeſt, and moſt rapacious Deſigns, were *Long Prayers*? Prayers made only *for a ſhew* or colour; and that, to the baſeſt and moſt degenerous ſort of Villainy, even the robbing the Spittle, and *devouring the Houſes* of poor, helpleſs, forlorn Widows. Their Devotion ſerv'd all along but as an Inſtrument to their Avarice, as a Factor or Under-Agent to their Extortion. A Practice, which duly ſeen into, and ſtript of its Hypocritical Blinds,

could not but look very odiouſly, and ill-favouredly; and therefore, in come their *long Robes*, and their *long Prayers* together, and cover all. And, the truth is, neither the Length of one, nor of the other, is ever found ſo uſefull, as when there is ſomething more than ordinary that would not be ſeen. This was the *gainfull Godlineſs* of the *Phariſees*; and, I believe, upon good Obſervation, you will hardly find, any like the *Phariſees* for their long Prayers, who are not alſo extremely like them for ſomething elſe. And thus having given you five Arguments for *Brevity*, and againſt *Prolixity* of Prayer; let us now make this our *other great Rule*, whereby to judge of the Prayers of *our Church*, and the Prayers of thoſe who *Diſſent* and *Divide* from it. And,

Firſt, For that excellent Body of Prayers contained in our Liturgy, and both compiled and enjoyned by Publick Authority. Have we not here, a great Inſtance of Brevity and Fulneſs together, caſt into ſeveral, ſhort, ſignificant Collects, each containing a diſtinct, entire, and well-

well-managed Petition? The whole Sett of them being like a ſtring of Pearls, exceeding rich in Conjunction; and therefore of no ſmall price, or value, even ſingle, and by themſelves. Nothing could have been compoſed with greater Judgment; Every Prayer being ſo ſhort, that it is impoſſible it ſhould weary; and withall, ſo pertinent, that it is impoſſible it ſhould cloy the Devotion. And indeed, ſo admirably fitted are they all to the common Concerns of a Chriſtian Society, that when the Rubrick enjoyns but the uſe of ſome of them, our Worſhip is not imperfect; and when we uſe them all, there is none of them ſuperfluous.

And the Reaſon aſſigned by ſome learned Men for the Preference of many ſhort Prayers, before a continued long one, is unanſwerable; Namely, That by the former there is a more frequently repeated mention made of the Name, and ſome great Attribute of God, as the encouraging Ground of our praying to Him; and withall, of the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt, as the only thing, that can pro-

miſe us ſucceſs, in what we pray for: Every diſtinct Petition *beginning* with the *former*, and *ending* with the *latter*: By thus annexing of which to each particular thing, that we ask for, we doe manifeſtly confeſs, and declare, That we cannot expect to obtain any one thing at the hands of God, but with a particular renewed reſpect to the Merits of a Mediator; and withall, re-mind the Congregation of the ſame, by making it their part to renew a diſtinct *Amen* to every diſtinct *Petition*.

Add to this, the Excellent contrivance of a great part of our Liturgy, into Alternate Reſponſes; by which means, the People are put to bear a conſiderable ſhare in the whole Service: which makes it almoſt impoſſible for them, to be only idle Hearers, or, which is worſe, meer Lookers on: As they are very often, and may be always (if they can but keep their Eyes open) at the long, tedious Prayers of the *Nonconformiſt*. And this indeed is that, which makes and denominates our Liturgy truly and properly a Book of *Common-prayer*. For, I think, I may truly avouch

vouch (how ſtrange ſoever it may ſeem at firſt) that there is no ſuch thing as *Common*, or *Joint-prayer*, any-where amongſt the principal Diſſenters from the Church of *England*: For, in the *Romiſh* Communion, the Prieſt ſays over the appointed Prayers only to himſelf, and the reſt of the People not hearing a word of what he ſays, repeat alſo their own particular Prayers to themſelves; and when they have done, go their way: Not all at once, as neither doe they come at once, but ſcatteringly, one after another, according as they have finiſhed their Devotions. And then, for the *Nonconformiſts*, their Prayers being all *extempore*, it is (as we have ſhewn before) hardly poſſible for *any*, and utterly impoſſible for *all*, to joyn in them: For, ſurely, People cannot joyn in a Prayer before they underſtand it; nor can it be imagined, that all Capacities ſhould preſently and immediately underſtand what they *hear*, when, poſſibly, *Holder-forth* himſelf underſtands not what he *ſays*. From all which we may venture to conclude, That, that excellent

cellent thing, *Common-prayer*, which is the joynt Addreſs of an whole Congregation, with united Voice, as well as Heart, ſending up their Devotions to Almighty God, is no-where to be found in theſe Kingdoms, but in that beſt and neareſt Copy of Primitive, Chriſtian Worſhip, the Divine Service, as it is performed according to the Orders of our Church.

As for thoſe long Prayers, ſo frequently uſed by ſome before their Sermons; the Conſtitution and Canons of our Church are not at all reſponſible for them, having provided us better things, and with great Wiſdom appointed a Form of Prayer, to be uſed by all before their Sermons. But as for this way of Praying, now generally in uſe, as it was firſt took up upon an humour of Novelty, and Popularity, and by the ſame carried on, till it had paſſed into a Cuſtom, and ſo put the Rule of the Church firſt out of Uſe, and then out of Countenance alſo; ſo, if it be rightly conſidered, it will, in the very nature of the thing it ſelf, be found a very ſenceleſs and abſurd practice. For,

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can there be any Senſe or Propriety in beginning a new, tedious Prayer in the Pulpit, juſt after the Church has, for near an hour together, with great variety of Offices, ſutable to all the Needs of the Congregation, been praying for all, that can poſſibly be fit for Chriſtians to pray for? Nothing certainly can be more irrational. For which Cauſe, amongſt many more, that old ſober Form of *Bidding Prayer*, which, both againſt Law and Reaſon, has been juſtled out of the Church by this Upſtart, Puritanical Encroachment, ought, with great Reaſon, to be reſtored by Authority; and both the Uſe and Uſers of it, by a ſtrict and ſolemn Reinforcement of the Canon upon all, without exception, be reſcued from that unjuſt Scorn of the Factious and Ignorant, which the Tyranny of the contrary, uſurping Cuſtom, will otherwiſe expoſe them to. For ſurely, it can neither be Decency nor Order for our Clergy to *Conform* to the Fanaticks, as many in their Prayers before Sermon now-a-days doe.

And thus having accounted for the Prayers

Prayers of our Church, according to the great Rule preſcribed in the *Text*, *Let thy Words be few*: Let us now, according to the ſame, conſider alſo the way of Praying, ſo much uſed, and applauded by ſuch, as have renounced the Communion, and Liturgy of our Church; and it is but reaſon, that they ſhould bring us ſomething better in the room of what they have ſo diſdainfully caſt off. But, on the contrary, are not all their Prayers exactly after the *Heatheniſh* and *Phariſaical* Copy? always notable for thoſe two Things, Length and Tautology? Two whole Hours for one Prayer, at a Faſt, uſed to be reckoned but a moderate Doſe; and that, for the moſt part, fraught with ſuch irreverent, blaſphemous Expreſſions, that, to repeat them, would profane the place I am ſpeaking in; and indeed, they ſeldom *carried on the work of ſuch a Day* (as their Phraſe was,) but they left the Church in need of a new Conſecration. Add to this, the Incoherence and Confuſion, the endleſs Repetitions, and the unſufferable Nonſenſe,

ſenſe, that never failed to hold out, even with their utmoſt Prolixity; ſo that in all their *long Faſts*, from firſt to laſt, from *ſeven* in the *Morning*, to *ſeven* in the *Evening*, (which was their meaſure) the Pulpit was always the *emptieſt* Thing in the Church: And I never knew ſuch a *Faſt* kept by them, but their Hearers had Cauſe to begin a *Thankſgiving*, as ſoon as they had done. And, the truth is, when I conſider the Matter of their Prayers; ſo full of Ramble, and Inconſequence, and in every reſpect, ſo very like the language of a Dream; and compare it with their Carriage of themſelves in Prayer, with their *Eyes*, for the moſt part, ſhut, and their *Arms* ſtretched out, in Yawning poſture, a Man that ſhould hear any of them pray, might, by a very pardonable Error, be induced to think, that he was all the time hearing one *talking in his ſleep*: beſides the ſtrange Vertue, which their Prayers had to procure ſleep in others too. So that he who ſhould be preſent at all their long Cant, would ſhew a greater Ability in *Watching*, than

ever

ever they could pretend to in *Praying*, if he could forbear ſleeping, having ſo ſtrong a Provocation to it, and ſo fair an Excuſe for it. In a word, ſuch were their Prayers, both for Matter and Expreſſion, that could any one truly and exactly write them out, it would be the ſhrewdeſt, and moſt effectual way of Writing againſt them, that could poſſibly be thought of.

I ſhould not have thus troubled either you, or my ſelf, by raking into the Dirt and Dunghill of theſe men's Devotions, upon the account of any thing, either done or ſaid by them in the late times of Confuſion; for as they have the *King*'s, ſo I wiſh them *God's pardon alſo*, for both, whom, I am ſure, they have offended much more, than they have both Kings put together. But that which has provoked me thus to rip up, and expoſe to you their nauſeous, and ridiculous way of addreſſing to God, even upon the moſt ſolemn Occaſions, is that intolerably rude and unprovoked Inſolence and Scurrility, with which they are every day reproaching and ſcoffing at our Liturgy, and the

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Uſers of it, and thereby alienating the Minds of the People from it, to ſuch a degree, that many Thouſands are drawn by them into a fatal Schiſm; A Schiſm that, unrepented of, and continued in, will as infallibly ruin their Souls, as Theft, Whoredom, Murther, or any other of the moſt crying, damning Sins whatſoever. But leaving this to the Juſtice of the Government, to which it belongs, to protect us in our Spiritual, as well as in our Temporal Concerns, I ſhall only ſay this, That nothing can be more for the Honour of our Liturgy, than to find it deſpiſed only by thoſe who have made themſelves remarkable to the World for deſpiſing the *Lord's Prayer* as much.

In the mean time, for our ſelves of the Church of *England*, who, without pretending to any New Lights, think it equally a Duty and Commendation to be *Wiſe*, and to be *Devout* only to *Sobriety*, and who judge it no diſhonour to God himſelf, to be Worſhipped according to Law and Rule. If the Directions of *Solomon*, the Precept and Example of our Saviours,

Saviour, and laſtly, the Piety and Experience of thoſe Excellent Men, and Martyrs, who firſt compoſed, and afterwards owned our Liturgy with their deareſt Blood, may be look'd upon as ſafe and ſufficient Guides to us in our publick Worſhip of God; then, upon the joint Authority of all theſe, we may pronounce our Liturgy the greateſt Treaſure of Rational Devotion in the Chriſtian World. And I know no Prayer neceſſary, that is not in the Liturgy, but one; which is this: *That God would vouchſafe to continue the Liturgy it ſelf in Uſe, Honour, and Veneration in this Church for ever.* And I doubt not, but all wiſe, ſober, and good Chriſtians, will with equal Judgment and Affection give it their *Amen.*

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and One God, be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

The

The *First*

SERMON

PREACHED UPON

ROM. I. 32.

Who knowing the judgment of God, (that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of Death) not onely doe the ſame, but have pleaſure in them, that doe them.

FRom the beginning of the 18th. *Verſe*, to the end of the 31ſt. (the *Verſe* immediately going before the *Text*) we have a Catalogue of the blackeſt Sins, that humane Nature, in its higheſt Depravation, is capable of committing; and this ſo perfect, that there ſeems to be no Sin imaginable, but what may be reduced to, and comprized under, ſome of the Sins here ſpecified. In a word, we have an Abridgment of the Lives and Practices

of the whole Heathen World; that is, of all the Baſeneſs and Villainy, that both the Corruption of Nature, and the Inſtigation of the Devil, could for ſo many Ages, by all the Arts and Opportunities, all the Motives and Incentives of Sinning bring the Sons of Men to. And yet, as full and comprehenſive as this Catalogue of Sin ſeems to be, it is but of Sin under a Limitation. An Univerſality of Sin under a Certain Kind; that is, of all Sins of *direct* and *perſonal* Commiſſion. And, you will ſay, is not this a ſufficient Comprehenſion of All? For, is not a Man's Perſon the Compaſs of his Actions? Or, can he Operate further, than he does Exiſt? Why, yes, in ſome ſenſe he may: He may not only *commit ſuch and ſuch Sins himſelf, but alſo take pleaſure in others, that do commit them.* Which Expreſſion implies theſe two things: Firſt, That thus *to take pleaſure in other men's Sins*, is a *diſtinct* Sin from all the former; And, ſecondly, that it is much *greater* than the former. For as much, as theſe terms, *not only doe the ſame, but*

but alſo take pleaſure, &c. import *Aggravation*, as well as *Diſtinction*; and are properly an Advance *à minore ad majus*, a progreſs to a further degree. And this, indeed, is the fartheſt that humane Pravity can reach, the higheſt point of Villainy, that the debauched Powers of Man's Mind can aſcend unto. For, ſurely, that Sin, that exceeds *Idolatry*, *monſtrous*, *unnatural Luſts*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Maliciouſneſs*, *Envy*, *Murther*, *Deceit*, *Back-biting*, *Hatred of God*, *Spightfulneſs*, *Pride*, *Diſobedience to Parents*, *Covenant-breaking*, *Want of Natural Affection*, *Implacableneſs*, *Unmercifulneſs*, *and the like*: I ſay, that Sin, that is a Pitch beyond all theſe, muſt needs be ſuch an one, as muſt non-plus the Devil himſelf, to proceed further: It is the very Extremity, the Fulneſs, and the concluding Period of Sin, the laſt Line, and finiſhing Stroke of the Devil's Image drawn upon the Soul of Man.

Now the ſenſe of the Words may be fully and naturally caſt into this one Propoſition, which ſhall be the Subject of the following Diſcourſe: *Viz.*

That the guilt ariſing from a Man's delighting, or taking pleaſure in other Men's Sins, or (which is all one) *in other Men for their Sins, is greater than he can poſſibly contract by a Commiſſion of the ſame Sins in his own Perſon.*

For the handling of which, I cannot but think it ſuperfluous, to offer at any Explication of what it is, *to take pleaſure in other Men's Sins*; it being impoſſible for any Man to be ſo far unacquainted with the Motions and Operations of his own Mind, as not to know, how it is affected and diſpoſed, when any thing pleaſes, or delights him. And therefore I ſhall ſtate the proſecution of the Propoſition upon theſe Three following Things.

I. I ſhall ſhew *what it is* that brings a Man to ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, *as* to take pleaſure in other men's Sins.

II. I ſhall ſhew the Reaſons, *Why* a Man's being diſpoſed to doe ſo, comes to be attended with ſuch an extraordinary Guilt: And,

III.

III. and Laſtly, I ſhall declare *what kind of Perſons* are to be reckoned under this Character.

Of each of which in their Order.

And firſt for the

I. Of theſe, *What it is that brings a man*, &c.

In order to which, I ſhall premiſe theſe Four Conſiderations.

1. That every Man naturally has a diſtinguiſhing Senſe of *Turpe & Honeſtum*; of what is *honeſt*, and what is *diſhoneſt*; of what is fit, and what is not fit to be done. There are thoſe Practical Principles, and Rules of Action, treaſured up in that part of Man's Mind, called by the Schools συντήρησις, that like the *Candle of the Lord*, ſet up by God himſelf in the Heart of every Man, diſcovers to him, both what he is to doe, and what to avoid: They are *a Light, lighting every Man that cometh into the World.*

And in reſpect of which principally it is, that God is ſaid not to have *left himſelf without witneſs* in the World; there being ſomething fixed in the Na-

ture of Man, that will be ſure to teſtifie and declare for him.

2. The ſecond Thing to be conſidered, is, That there is conſequently upon this diſtinguiſhing Principle an inward ſatisfaction, or diſſatisfaction, ariſing in the Heart of every Man, after he has done a good, or an evil Action. An Action agreeable to or deviating from this great Rule. And this, no doubt, proceeds not only from the real Unſutableneſs, that every thing ſinfull, or diſhoneſt, bears to the Nature of Man, but alſo from a ſecret, inward, fore-boding Fear, that ſome Evil or other will follow the doing of that, which a Man's own Conſcience diſallows him in. For, no Man naturally is, or can be, chearfull, immediately upon the doing of a wicked Action. There being ſomething within him, that preſently gives Sentence againſt him for it: Which, no queſtion, is the Voice of God himſelf, ſpeaking in the Hearts of Men, whether they underſtand it or no; and by ſecret Intimations giving the Sinner a fore-taſt of that direfull Cup, which he

he is like to drink more deeply of hereafter.

3. The third Thing to be conſidered, is, That this diſtinguiſhing *Senſe of good and evil*, and this ſatisfaction, or diſſatisfaction, of Mind, conſequent upon a Man's acting ſutably, or unſutably to it, is a Principle neither preſently, nor eaſily, to be worn out, or extinguiſhed. For, beſides, that it is founded in Nature (which kind of things are always moſt durable, and laſting) the great important End that God deſigns it for, (which is no leſs than the Government of the Nobleſt part of the World, Mankind) ſufficiently ſhews the Neceſſity of its being rooted deep in the Heart, and put beyond the Danger of being torn up by any ordinary Violence done to it.

4. The fourth and laſt Thing to be conſidered, is, That, that which weakens, and directly tends to extinguiſh this Principle, (ſo far as 'tis capable of being extinguiſhed) is an inferior, ſenſitive Principle, which receives its Gratificati-

ons from Objects clean contrary to the former; and, which affect a Man, in the ſtate of this preſent life, much more warmly and vividly than thoſe, which affect only his Nobler part, his *Mind*. So that there being a Contrariety between thoſe things, that Conſcience enclines to, and thoſe that entertain the Senſes; and ſince the more quick and affecting pleaſure ſtill ariſes from theſe latter, it follows, that the Gratifications of theſe are more powerfull to Command the Principles of Action, than the other, and conſequently are, for the moſt part, too hard for, and victorious over, the Dictates of Right Reaſon.

Now from theſe Four Conſiderations, thus premiſed, we naturally inferr theſe Two things:

Firſt, That no man is quickly, or eaſily, brought to take a full pleaſure and delight in his own Sins. For, though Sin offers it ſelf in never ſo pleaſing and alluring a Dreſs, at firſt, yet the Remorſe, and inward Regrets of the Soul, upon the Commiſſion of it, infinitely over-balance

thoſe faint and tranſient Gratifications it affords the Senſes. So that, upon the whole matter, the Sinner, even at his higheſt pitch of Enjoyment, is not pleaſed with it ſo much, but he is afflicted more. And, as long as theſe inward rejolts and recoilings of the Mind continue, (which they will certainly do for a conſiderable part of a Man's Life) the Sinner will find his Accounts of Pleaſure very poor and ſhort; being ſo mixed, and indeed overdone with the contrary Impreſſions of Trouble upon his Mind, that it is but a bitter-ſweet at beſt; and the fine Colours of the Serpent doe by no means make amends for the ſmart, and poiſon of his Sting.

Secondly, The other thing to be inferred, is, That, as no Man is quickly, or eaſily brought to take a full pleaſure or delight in his own Sins, ſo much leſs eaſily can he be brought to take pleaſure in thoſe of other Men. The Reaſon is, Becauſe the chief Motive (as we have obſerved) that induces a Man to Sin, which is the Gratification of his ſenſitive Part, by

a ſinfull Act, cannot be had from the Sins of another Man; *ſince* naturally, and directly, they affect only the Agent that commits them. For, certainly another man's Intemperance cannot affect my Senſuality, any more, than the Meat and Drink, that I take into my Mouth, can pleaſe his Palate: But of this more fully in ſome of the following Particulars.

In the mean time, it is evident from Reaſon, that there is a conſiderable Difficulty in a Man's arriving to ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, as ſhall make him take pleaſure in other men's Sins; and yet, it is alſo as evident from the Text, and from Experience too, that ſome Men are brought to do ſo. And therefore, ſince there is no Effect, of what kind ſoever, but is reſolvable into ſome Cauſe: We will enquire into the Cauſe of this vile and preter-natural Temper of Mind, that ſhould make a Man pleaſe himſelf with that, which can no ways reach or affect thoſe Faculties, and Principles, which Nature has made the proper Seat, and Subject of Pleaſure. Now the Cauſes

(or

(or at leaſt ſome of the Cauſes) that debauch and corrupt the Mind of Man to ſuch a degree, as to take pleaſure in other men's Sins, are theſe Five.

1. A Commiſſion of the ſame Sins in a Man's own Perſon. This is imported in the very Words of the Text; where it is ſaid of ſuch perſons, that *they not only doe the ſame things*; which muſt therefore imply, *that they doe them.* It is Converſation, and Acquaintance, that muſt give delight in Things and Actions, as well as in Perſons. And it is Tryal that muſt begin the Acquaintance. It being hardly imaginable, that one ſhould be delighted with a Sin at *ſecond hand*, till he has known it *at the firſt.* Delight is the Natural Reſult of Practice, and Experiment; and when it flows from any thing elſe, ſo far it recedes from Nature. None look with ſo much pleaſure upon the Works of Art, as thoſe who are Artiſts themſelves. They are therefore their delight, becauſe they were heretofore their Imployment; and they love to ſee ſuch things, becauſe they once loved to

doe

doe them. In like manner, a Man muſt Sin himſelf into a Love of other men's Sins; for a bare Notion or Speculation of this black Art will not carry him ſo far. No ſober, temperate Perſon in the World (whatſoever other Sins he may be inclinable to, and guilty of,) can look with any Complacency upon the Drunkenneſs and Sottiſhneſs of his Neighbour: Nor can any Chaſt perſon (be his other failings what they will) reflect with any pleaſure or delight, upon the filthy, unclean Converſation of another, though never ſo much in faſhion, and vouched not by common Uſe only, but Applauſe. No; he muſt be firſt an Exerciſed, thorough-paced Practitioner of theſe Vices himſelf; and they muſt have endeared themſelves to him by thoſe perſonal Gratifications, he had received from them, before he can come to like them ſo far, as to be pleaſed, and enamour'd with them whereſoever he ſees them. It is poſſible indeed, that a ſober, or a chaſt Perſon, upon the Stock of *Ill-will*, *Envy*, or *Spiritual Pride*, (which is all the Religion that ſome have)

have) may be glad to ſee the Intemperance, and Debauchery of ſome about them: but it is impoſſible, that ſuch Perſons ſhould take any delight in the Men themſelves for being ſo. The truth is, in ſuch a caſe, they doe not properly delight in the Vice it ſelf, though they inwardly rejoice (and *after a godly ſort*, no doubt) to ſee another guilty of it; but they delight in the miſchief and diſaſter, which, they know, it will aſſuredly bring upon him, whom they hate, and wiſh ill to: They rejoice not in it, as in a delightfull Object, but as in a Cauſe and Means of their Neighbour's Ruin. So gratefull, nay ſo delicious are even the horrideſt Villainies committed by others to the *Phariſaical* Piety of ſome; who, in the mean time, can be wholly unconcerned for the Reproach brought thereby upon the Name of God, and the Honour of Religion, ſo long as by the ſame their Sanctified Spleen is gratified in their Brother's Infamy, and Deſtruction.

This therefore we may reckon upon, that ſcarce any Man paſſes to a liking of

Sin

Sin in others, but by firſt practiſing it himſelf; and conſequently, may take it for a ſhrewd Indication, and Sign, whereby to judge of the Manners of thoſe, who have ſinned with too much Art and Caution, to ſuffer the Eye of the World to charge ſome Sins directly upon their Converſation. For, though ſuch kind of Men have lived never ſo much upon the Reſerve, as to their Perſonal Behaviour, yet if they be obſerved to have a particular delight in, and fondneſs for *Perſons* noted for any ſort of Sin, it is ten to one, but there was a Communication in the Sin, before there was ſo in Affection. The Man has, by this, directed us to a Copy of Himſelf; and, though we cannot always come to a ſight of the Original, yet by a true Copy we may know all *that is in it.*

2*ly*. A ſecond Cauſe, that brings a Man to take pleaſure in other men's Sins, is not only a Commiſſion of thoſe Sins in his own Perſon, but alſo a Commiſſion of them againſt the full Light and Conviction of his Conſcience. For this alſo is expreſſed

preſſed in the Text; where the Perſons charged with this wretched Diſpoſition of Mind are ſaid to have been ſuch *as knew the Judgment of God, that they, who committed ſuch things, were worthy of Death.* They knew that there was a righteous, and a ſearching Law, directly forbidding ſuch Practices; and they knew that it carried with it the Divine Stamp, that it was the *Law of God*; they knew alſo, that the Sanction of it was under the greateſt, and dreadfulleſt of all Penalties, *Death.* And this ſurely (one would think) was Knowledge enough to have opened both a man's Eyes, and his Heart too; his Eyes to ſee, and his Heart to conſider the intolerable miſchief that the Commiſſion of the Sin ſet before him muſt infallibly plunge him into. Nevertheleſs, the Perſons here mentioned were reſolved to venture, and to commit the Sin, even while Conſcience ſtood proteſting againſt it. They were ſuch, as broke through all Mounds of Law, ſuch as laugh'd at the *Sword of Vengeance*, which Divine Juſtice brandiſh'd in their faces. For, we muſt

muſt know, that God has ſet a *flaming Sword* not only before *Paradiſe*, but before *Hell* it ſelf alſo; to keep Men out of this, as well as out of the other. And Conſcience is the *Angel*, into whoſe hand this *Sword* is put. But if now, the Sinner ſhall not only *wreſtle* with this *Angel*, but *throw* him too; and win ſo complete a Victory over his Conſcience, that all theſe Conſiderations ſhall be able to ſtrike no Terror into his Mind, lay no Reſtraint upon his Luſts, no Controll upon his Appetites; he is certainly too ſtrong for the Means of Grace; and his Heart lies open, like a broad and high Road for all the Sin and Villainy in the World freely to paſs through.

The Truth is, if we impartially conſider the Nature of theſe *Sins againſt Conſcience*, we ſhall find them ſuch ſtrange Paradoxes, that a man muſt baulk all Common Principles, and act contrary to the Natural way and motive of all Humane Actions, in the Commiſſion of them. For that, which naturally moves a man to doe any thing, muſt be the Apprehenſion

prehenſion and Expectation of ſome good from the thing, which he is about to doe: And that which naturally keeps a man from doing of a thing, muſt be the Apprehenſion and Fear of ſome miſchief likely to enſue from that Thing, or Action, that he is ready to engage in. But now, for a man to doe a thing, while his Conſcience, the beſt Light that he has to judge by, aſſures him, that he ſhall be infinitely, unſupportably miſerable, if he does it; this is certainly unnatural, and (one would imagine) impoſſible.

And therefore, ſo far as one may judge, while a man acts againſt his Conſcience, he acts by a Principle of direct *Infidelity*, and does not really believe that thoſe things, that God has thus threatned, ſhall ever come to paſs. For, though he may yield a general, faint Aſſent to the Truth of thoſe Propoſitions, as they ſtand recorded in Scripture; yet, for a through, Practical belief, that thoſe general Propoſitions ſhall be particularly made good upon his Perſon, no doubt, for the time that he is ſinning againſt Conſcience, ſuch

a belief has no place in his Mind. Which being ſo, it is eaſy to conceive, how ready and diſpoſed this muſt needs leave the Soul, to admit of any, even the moſt horrid, unnatural Propoſals, that the Devil himſelf can ſuggeſt: For Conſcience being once extinct, and the Spirit of God withdrawn, (which never ſtays with a Man, when Conſcience has once left him) the Soul, like the *firſt Matter to all Forms*, has an Univerſal Propenſity to all Lewdneſs. For every Violation of Conſcience proportionably wears off ſomething of its Native Tenderneſs, which Tenderneſs being the Cauſe of that Anguiſh and Remorſe that it feels, upon the Commiſſion of Sin; it follows, that when, by degrees, it comes to have worn off all this Tenderneſs, the Sinner will find no Trouble of Mind upon his doing the very wickedeſt, and worſt of Actions; and conſequently, that this is the moſt direct and effectual Introduction to all ſorts and degrees of Sin.

For which Reaſon it was, that I alledged *Sinning againſt Conſcience* for one of the

the Cauſes of this vile Temper, and Habit of Mind, which we are now diſcourſing of: Not that it has any ſpecial productive Efficiency of this particular ſort of Sinning, more than of any other, but that it is a general Cauſe of this, as of all other great Vices; and that it is impoſſible, but a Man muſt have firſt paſſed this notable Stage, and got his Conſcience throughly debauched, and hardned, before he can arrive to the height of Sin; which I account the delighting in other men's Sins to be.

3*ly*. A third Cauſe of this Villainous diſpoſition of Mind, *beſides* a man's perſonal Commiſſion of ſuch and ſuch Sins, and his Commiſſion of them againſt Conſcience, muſt be alſo his Continuance in them. For, God forbid, that every ſingle Commiſſion of a Sin, though great for its Kind, and withall, acted againſt Conſcience, for its Aggravation, ſhould ſo far deprave the Soul, and bring it to ſuch a *Reprobate Senſe*, and Condition, as to *take pleaſure in other men's Sins*. For, we know what a foul Sin *David* committed, and

what a Crime St. *Peter* himſelf fell into; both of them, no doubt, fully and clearly againſt the Dictates of their Conſcience; yet we do not find, that either of them was thereby brought to ſuch an impious frame of Heart, as to delight in their own Sins, and much leſs in other men's. And therefore, it is not every ſinfull Violation of Conſcience that can *quench the Spirit*, to ſuch a degree, as we have been ſpeaking of; but it muſt be a long, inveterate Courſe and Cuſtom of Sinning after this manner, that, at length, produces and ends in ſuch a curſed Effect. For, this is ſo great a Maſter-piece in Sin, that no Man begins with it: He muſt have paſs'd his *Tyrocinium*, or *Novitiate*, in Sinning, before he can come to this, be he never ſo quick a Proficient. No man can mount ſo faſt, as to ſet his Foot upon the higheſt ſtep of the Ladder at firſt. Before a man can come to be pleaſed with a Sin, becauſe he ſees his Neighbour commit it, he muſt have had ſuch a long Acquaintance with it himſelf, as to create a kind of Intimacy, or Friendſhip, between him and That;

and

and then, we know, a Man is Naturally glad to ſee his Old friend, not only at his own Houſe, but whereſoever he meets him. It is generally the Property of an Old Sinner to find a delight in re-viewing his own Villainies in the Practice of other Men; to ſee his Sin, and himſelf (as it were) in Reverſion; and to find a greater ſatisfaction in beholding him, who ſucceeds him in his Vice, than him, who is to ſucceed him in his Eſtate. In the matter of Sin, Age makes a greater Change upon the Soul, than it does, or can, upon the Body. And as in this, if we compare the Picture of a Man, drawn at the Years of Seventeen, or Eighteen, with the Picture of the ſame perſon at Threeſcore and Ten, hardly the leaſt Trace or Similitude of one Face can be found in the other. So for the Soul, the Difference of the Diſpoſitions, and Qualities of the Inner Man, will be found much greater. Compare the Harmleſneſs, the Credulity, the Tenderneſs, the Modeſty, and the Ingenuous pliableneſs to vertuous Counſels, which is in Youth,

as it comes freſh and untainted out of the hands of Nature, with the Miſchievouſneſs, the Slyneſs, the Craft, the Impudence, the Falſhood, and the confirmed Obſtinacy in moſt ſorts of Sin, that is to be found in an aged, long-practiſed Sinner, and you will confeſs the Complexion and Hue of his Soul, to be altered more than that of his Face. Age has given him another Body, and Cuſtom another Mind. All thoſe Seeds of Virtue, and good Morality, that were the Natural Endowments of our firſt Years, are loſt, and dead for ever. And in reſpect of the Native Innocence of Childhood, no man, through *Old Age*, becomes *twice a Child*. The Vices of Old Age have in them the ſtiffneſs of it too. And as it is the unfitteſt Time to *learn in*, ſo the unfitneſs of it to *unlearn* will be found much greater.

Which Conſiderations, joyned with that of its Imbecillity, make it the proper Seaſon for a ſuper-annuated Sinner to enjoy the Delights of Sin in the Rebound; and to ſupply the Impotence of Practice by the airy, phantaſtick Pleaſure of Memory

mory and Reflexion. For all that can be allowed him now, is to refreſh his decrepit, effete Senſuality, with the Tranſcript and Hiſtory of his former Life, recognized, and read over by him, in the vitious Rants of the vigorous, youthfull Debauchees of the preſent time, whom (with an odd kind of Paſſion, mixed of Pleaſure, and Envy too) he ſees flouriſhing in all the bravery and prime of their Age and Vice. An old Wreſtler loves to look on, and to be near the Liſts, though *Feebleneſs* will not let him offer at the Prize. An old Huntſman finds a Muſick in the Noiſe of Hounds, though he cannot follow the Chace. An old Drunkard loves a Tavern, though he cannot go to it, but as he is ſupported, and led by another, juſt as ſome are obſerved to come from thence. And an old Wanton, will be doating upon Women, when he can ſcarce ſee them without Spectacles. And to ſhew the true Love and faithfull Allegiance that the Old Servants and Subjects of Vice ever after bear to it, nothing is more uſual, and frequent, than to hear,

that ſuch, as have been Strumpets in their Youth, turn Procurers in their Age. Their great Concern is, that the Vice may ſtill go on.

4*ly*. A fourth Cauſe of men's taking pleaſure in the Sins of others, is, from that meanneſs, and poor-ſpiritedneſs, that naturally and inſeparably accompanies all Guilt. Whoſoever is conſcious to himſelf of Sin, feels in himſelf (whether he will own it or no) a proportionable Shame, and a ſecret Depreſſion of Spirit thereupon. And this is ſo irkſome, and uneaſie to Man's mind, that he is reſtleſs to relieve, and rid himſelf from it: For which, he finds no way ſo effectual, as to get Company in the ſame Sin. For Company, in any Action, gives both Credit to that, and Countenance to the Agent; and ſo much as the Sinner gets of this, ſo much he caſts off of Shame. Singularity in Sin puts it out of faſhion; ſince to be alone in any Practice, ſeems to make the Judgment of the World againſt it; but the Concurrence of others is a Tacit Approbation of that, in which they

they concurr. Solitude is a kind of Nakedneſs, and the Reſult of that, we know, is Shame. 'Tis Company only that can bear a Man out in an ill Thing; and he who is to encounter and fight the Law, will be ſure to need a *Second*. No wonder therefore, if ſome take delight in the Immoralities, and Baſeneſs of others; for nothing can ſupport their Minds drooping, and ſneaking, and inwardly reproaching them, from a ſenſe of their own guilt, but to ſee others as bad as themſelves.

To be Vicious amongſt the Vertuous, is a double diſgrace and miſery; but where the whole Company is vitious, and debauched, they preſently like, or *at leaſt eaſily pardon one another*. And, as it is obſerved by ſome, that there is none ſo homely, but loves a Looking-glaſs; ſo it is certain, that there is no man ſo vicious, but delights to ſee the Image of his Vice reflected upon him, from one who exceeds, or at leaſt equals him in the ſame.

Sin

Sin in it ſelf, is not only ſhamefull, but alſo weak; and it ſeeks a Remedy for both in Society: For it is this, that muſt give it both Colour and Support. But, on the contrary, how great and (as I may ſo ſpeak) how Self-ſufficient a thing is Vertue! It needs no Credit from Abroad, no Countenance from the Multitude. Were there but one vertuous Man in the World, he would hold up his Head with Confidence, and Honour: He would ſhame the World, and not the World him. For, according to that excellent and great Saying, *Prov.* 14. 14. *A good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.* He needs look no further. But if he deſires to ſee the ſame Vertue propagated, and diffuſed to thoſe about him; it is for their ſakes, not his own. It is his Charity that wiſhes, and not his Neceſſity that requires it. For Solitude and Singularity can neither daunt, nor diſgrace him; unleſs we could ſuppoſe it a diſgrace for a man to be ſingularly good.

But a vicious Perſon, like the baſeſt ſort of Beaſts, never enjoys himſelf, but in

in the Herd. Company, he think, leſſens the ſhame of Vice, by ſharing it; and abates the Torrent of a common Odium, by deriving it into many Channels; And therefore, if he cannot wholly avoid the Eye of the Obſerver, he hopes to diſtract it at leaſt by a multiplicity of the Object. Theſe, I confeſs, are poor Shifts, and miſerable Shelters, for a Sick and a Self-upbraiding Conſcience to fly to; and yet they are ſome of the beſt, that the Debauchee has to cheer up his Spirits with in this World. For, if after all, he muſt needs be ſeen, and took notice of, with all his Filth and Noiſomeneſs about him, he promiſes himſelf however, that it will be ſome allay to his Reproach, to be but one of many, to march in a Troop, and by a prepoſterous kind of *Ambition, to be ſeen in bad Company.*

5. The fifth and laſt Cauſe (that I ſhall mention) inducing Men to take pleaſure in the Sins of others, is a certain, peculiar, unaccountable Malignity, that is in ſome Natures and Diſpoſitions. I know no other Name, or Word, to expreſs it by.

But

But the thing it ſelf is frequently ſeen in the Temporal Concerns of this World. For, are there not ſome who find an inward, ſecret Rejoycing in themſelves, when they ſee, or hear, of the loſs, or calamity of their Neighbour, though no imaginable Intereſt, or Advantage of their own, is, or can be, ſerved thereby? But (it ſeems) there is a baſe, Wolviſh Principle within, that is fed, and gratified with another's Miſery; and no other Account or Reaſon in the World can be given of its being ſo, but that it is *the Nature of the Beaſt* to delight in ſuch things.

And as this occurrs frequently in Temporals, ſo there is no doubt, but that with ſome few perſons, it acts the ſame way alſo in Spirituals. I ſay, with ſome few perſons; for, thanks be to God, the common, known Corruption of humane Nature, upon the bare ſtock of its Original Depravation, does not uſually proceed ſo far. Such an one, for inſtance, was that Wretch, who made a poor Captive renounce his Religion, in order to the

the ſaving of his Life; and when he had ſo done, preſently run him through, glorying, that he had thereby deſtroyed his Enemy, both Body and Soul. But more remarkably ſuch, was that Monſter of Diabolical Baſeneſs here in *England*, who, ſome years ſince, in the Reign of King *Charles* the Firſt, ſuffered Death for Crimes ſcarce ever heard of before; having frequently boaſted, that as ſeveral Men had their ſeveral Pleaſures and Recreations, ſo his peculiar Pleaſure and Recreation was to *deſtroy Souls*, and accordingly to put men upon ſuch Practices as he knew would aſſuredly doe it. But above all, the late Saying of ſome of the Diſſenting Brotherhood ought to be proclaimed and celebrated to their Eternal Honour: who, while there was another New Oath preparing, which they both ſuppoſed and hoped moſt of the Clergy would not take, in a moſt inſulting manner gave out thereupon; *That they were reſolved either to have our Livings, or to Damn our Souls.* An Expreſſion, ſo fraught with all the Spight and Poyſon which the

the Devil himſelf could infuſe into Words, that it ought to Remain as a Monument of the Humanity, Charity and Chriſtianity of this ſort of men for ever.

Now ſuch a Temper or Principle, as theſe, and the like Paſſages doe import, I call a *peculiar Malignity of Nature*; ſince it is evident, that neither the inveterate Love of Vice, nor yet the long Practice of it, and that even againſt the Reluctancies, and Light of Conſcience, can of it ſelf have this deviliſh effect upon the Mind, but as it falls in with ſuch a villainous, preter-natural Diſpoſition, as I have mentioned. For to inſtance in the Particular Caſe of Parents and Children, let a Father be never ſo Vitious, yet, generally ſpeaking, he would not have his Child ſo. Nay, it is certain, that ſome, who have been as corrupt in their Morals, as Vice could make them, have yet been infinitely ſolicitous, to have their Children ſoberly, vertuouſly, and piouſly brought up: So that, although they have *begot Sons after their own likeneſs*, yet they are not willing to *breed* them ſo too.

Which,

Which, by the way, is the moſt pregnant demonſtration in the World, of that Self-condemning Sentence, that is perpetually ſounding in every great Sinner's Breaſt; and of that inward, grating diſlike of the very thing he practiſes, that he ſhould abhorr to ſee the ſame in any one, whoſe Good he nearly tenders, and whoſe Perſon he wiſhes well to. But if now, on the other ſide, we ſhould chance to find a Father corrupting his Son, or a Mother debauching her Daughter, as (God knows ſuch Monſters have been ſeen within the four Seas) we muſt not charge this barely upon an high Predominance of Vice in theſe perſons, but much more upon a peculiar Anomaly, and Baſeneſs of Nature: If the Name of *Nature* may be allowed to that which ſeems to be an utter caſhiering of it; a Deviation from, and a Contradiction to the common Principles of Humanity. For this is ſuch a Diſpoſition, as ſtrips the *Father* of the *Man*; as makes him *Sacrifice his Children to Molech*; and as much out-do the cruelty of a *Cannibal*, or a *Saturn*, as it is more barbarous, and unhumane

unhumane to *damn* a Child than to *devour* him. We ſometimes read and hear of Monſtrous *Births*, but we may often ſee a greater Monſtroſity in *Educations*; thus, when a Father has begot a Man, he trains him up into a Beaſt. Making even his own Houſe a Stews, a Bordell, and a School of Lewdneſs, to inſtill the Rudiments of Vice, into the unwary, flexible years of his poor Children, poiſoning their tender minds with the irreſiſtible, authentick Venom of his baſe Example; ſo that all the Inſtruction they find within their Father's Walls, ſhall be only to be diſciplined to an earlier Practice of Sin, to be *catechiſed* into all the Myſteries of Iniquity, and, at length, *confirmed* in a mature, grown up, incorrigible ſtate of Debauchery. And this ſome Parents call a teaching their Children *to know the World*, and to *ſtudy Men*: Thus leading them (as it were) by the hand, through all the Forms and Claſſes, all the Varieties and Modes of Villainy, till at length they make them ten times more the Children of the *Devil*, than of *themſelves*. Now,

I ſay,

I ſay, if the unparallell'd Wickedneſs of the Age ſhould at any time caſt us upon ſuch blemiſhes of Mankind as theſe, who, while they thus treat their Children, ſhould abuſe, and uſurp the Name of *Parents*, by aſſuming it to themſelves; let us not call them by the low, diminutive Term or Title of *Sinfull*, *Wicked*, or *Ungodly* Men; but let us look upon them as ſo many prodigious Exceptions from our Common Nature, as ſo many portentous Animals, like the ſtrange, unnatural Productions of *Africa*, and fit to be *publickly ſhewn*, were they not unfit to *be ſeen*. For certainly, where a Child finds his own Parents, his Perverters, he cannot be ſo properly ſaid to be *Born*, as to be *Damned into the World*; and better were it for him by far to have been *unborn*, and *unbegot*, than to come to *ask bleſſing* of thoſe whoſe Converſation breaths nothing but Contagion and a *Curſe*. ſo impoſſible, and ſo much a Paradox is it for any Parent to impart to his Child his Bleſſing, and his Vice too.

And thus I have diſpatched the *firſt general thing* propoſed for the handling of the Words, and ſhewn in five ſeveral Particulars, *What it is, that brings a man to ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, as to take pleaſure in other men's Sins.* I proceed now to the

II^d^. Which is, *To ſhew the Reaſons, why a man's being diſpoſed to doe ſo, comes to be attended with ſuch an extraordinary Guilt.* And the Firſt ſhall be taken from this, That naturally there is no Motive to induce or tempt a man to this way of Sinning. And this is a moſt certain Truth, That the leſſer the Temptation is, the greater is the Sin. For, in every Sin, by how much the more free the Will is in its Choice, by ſo much is the Act the more Sinfull. *And*, where there is nothing to importune, urge, or provoke it to any Act, there is ſo much an higher, and perfecter degree of Freedom, about that Act. For albeit, the Will is not capable of being compelled to any of its Actings, yet it is capable of being made to Act with more or leſs Difficulty, accord-

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ing to the different Impreſſions it receives from Motives, or Objects. If the Object be extremely pleaſing, and apt to gratifie it; there, though the Will has ſtill a power of Refuſing it, yet it is not without ſome Difficulty. Upon which account it is, that Men are ſo ſtongly carried out to, and ſo hardly took off from the Practice of Vice; namely, becauſe the ſenſual pleaſure ariſing *from it*, is ſtill importuning and drawing them *to it*.

But, now from whence ſprings this pleaſure? Is it not from the gratification of ſome Deſire founded in Nature? An irregular gratification it is indeed very often; yet ſtill the foundation of it is, and muſt be, ſomething Natural: So that the Summ of all is this, That the Naturalneſs of a Deſire, is the Cauſe that the Satisfaction of it is Pleaſure, and Pleaſure importunes the Will; and that which importunes the Will, puts a Difficulty in the Will's refuſing or forbearing it. Thus Drunkenneſs is an irregular ſatisfaction of the Appetite of Thirſt;

Uncleanneſs an unlawfull Gratification of the Appetite of Procreation; and Covetouſneſs a boundleſs, unreaſonable purſuit of the Principle of Self-preſervation. So that all theſe are founded in ſome Natural deſire, and are therefore pleaſurable, and upon that account tempt, ſolicite and entice the Will. In a word; there is hardly any one Vice or Sin of direct and perſonal Commiſſion, but what is the Irregularity and Abuſe of one of thoſe two grand Natural Principles; namely, Either that which inclines a Man to *preſerve himſelf*, or that which inclines him to *pleaſe himſelf*.

But now, what Principle, Faculty or Deſire, by which Nature projects either its own *pleaſure*, or *preſervation*, is, or can be gratified by another man's perſonal purſuit of his own Vice? It is evident, that all the pleaſure, that *naturally* can be received from a vicious Action, can immediately, and perſonally affect none but him who does it; for it is an Application of the pleaſing Object only to his own Senſe; and no man feels by another man's Senſes.

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And therefore the delight, that a man takes from another's Sin, can be nothing elſe but a phantaſtical, preter-natural Complacency ariſing from that, which he has really no ſenſe or feeling of. It is properly a love of Vice, as ſuch; a delighting in Sin for its own ſake; and is a direct Imitation, or rather an Exemplification of the Malice of the Devil; who delights in ſeeing thoſe Sins committed, which the very Condition of his Nature renders him uncapable of committing himſelf. For the Devil can neither Drink, nor Whore, nor play the Epicure, though he enjoys the Pleaſures of all theſe at a ſecond hand, and by malicious Approbation. If a man plays the Thief (ſays *Solomon*) *and ſteals to ſatisfie his hunger*, Prov. 6. 30. Though it cannot wholly excuſe the Fact, yet it ſometimes extenuates the Guilt. And we know there are ſome corrupt Affections in the Soul of Man, that urge, and puſh him on, to their ſatisfaction, with ſuch an impetuous fury, that, when we ſee a man over-born and run down by them, conſidering the frailty of humane

Nature, we cannot but pity the Perſon, while we abhorr the Crime. It being like one ready to drink Poiſon, rather than to die with Thirſt.

But when a man ſhall with a ſober, ſedate, diabolical Rancour, look upon and enjoy himſelf in the ſight of his Neighbour's Sin and Shame, and ſecretly hug himſelf upon the Ruins of his Brother's Vertue, and the Diſhonours of his Reaſon, can he plead the Inſtigation of any Appetite in Nature enclining him to this? And that would otherwiſe render him uneaſie to himſelf, ſhould he not thus triumph in another's folly and confuſion? No, certainly; this cannot be ſo much as pretended. For he may as well carry his Eyes in another man's Head, and run Races with another man's Feet, as directly and naturally taſt the Pleaſures, that ſpring from the Gratification of another man's Appetites.

Nor can that Perſon, whoſoever he is, who accounts it his Recreation and Diverſion, to ſee *one man* wallowing in his filthy Revels, and another made infamous

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and noiſome by his Senſuality, be ſo impudent, as to alledge for a reaſon of his ſo doing, That either all the enormous Draughts of the one, doe or can leave the leaſt Reliſh upon the Tip of his Tongue; or, that all the Fornications and Whoredoms of the other, do or can quench, or cool the boilings of his own Luſt. No; this is impoſſible. And if ſo, what can we then aſſign for the Cauſe of this monſtrous Diſpoſition? Why, all that can be ſaid in this caſe, is that Nature proceeds by quite another method; having given Men ſuch and ſuch Appetites, and allotted to each of them their reſpective Pleaſures; the *Appetite*, and the *Pleaſure*, ſtill co-habiting in the ſame Subject; But the Devil and long Cuſtom of Sinning have ſuper-induced upon the Soul, new, unnatural, and abſurd Deſires; Deſires, that have no real Object; Deſires, that reliſh things not at all deſirable; but, like the ſickneſs and diſtemper of the Soul, feeding only upon Filth and Corruption, Fire and Brimſtone, and giving a Man the Devil's Nature,

and the Devil's Delight; who has no other Joy or Happineſs, but to diſhonour his Maker, and to deſtroy his Fellow-creature; to Corrupt him here, and to Torment him hereafter. In fine, there is as much difference between the pleaſure a Man takes in his own Sins, and that which he takes in other men's, as there is between the Wickedneſs of a Man, and the Wickedneſs of a Devil.

2. A ſecond Reaſon why a man's taking pleaſure in the Sins of others, comes to be attended with ſuch an extraordinary Guilt, is from the boundleſs, unlimited Nature of this way of Sinning. For by this a man contracts a kind of an Univerſal Guilt, and (as it were) Sins over the Sins of all other Men; ſo that while the *Act* is theirs, the *Guilt* of it is equally his: Conſider any Man as to his perſonal Powers, and Opportunities of Sinning, and comparatively, they are not great; for at greateſt they muſt ſtill be limited by the meaſure of Man's Actings, and the term of his Duration. And a Man's active Powers are but weak, and

his

his Continuance in the World but ſhort. So that Nature is not ſufficient to keep pace with his Corruptions, by anſwering Deſire with proportionable Practice.

For to inſtance in thoſe two grand Extravagances of *Luſt* and *Drunkenneſs*: Surely no man is of ſo general and diffuſive a Luſt, as to proſecute his Amours all the World over; and let it burn never ſo out-ragiouſly for the preſent, yet Age will in time chill thoſe Heats; and the impure Flame will either die of it ſelf, or conſume the Body that harbours it. And ſo for Intemperance in Drinking; no man can be ſo much a Swine, as to be always pouring in, but in the compaſs of ſome years he will drown his Health and his Strength in his own Belly; and after all his Drunken Trophies, at length *Drink down* himſelf too; and that certainly will, and muſt, put an end to the Debauch.

But now, for the way of Sinning, which we have been ſpeaking of, it is neither confined by Place, nor weakned by Age; But the Bed-rid, the Gouty, and the

the Lethargick, may, upon this account, equal the Activity of the ſtrongeſt, and moſt vegete Sinner. Such an one may take his Brother by the Throat, and act the Murtherer, even while he can neither ſtir an hand, nor a foot; and he may invade his Neighbour's Bed, while Weakneſs has tied him down to his own. He may ſin over all the Adulteries and Debauches, all the Frauds and Oppreſſions of the whole Neighbourhood, and (as I may ſo ſpeak) he may break every Command of God's Law by Proxy, and it were well for him, if he could be damned by Proxy too. A man, by Delight and Fancy, may graſp in the Sins of all Countries, and Ages, and by an inward liking of them communicate in their Guilt. He may take a Range all the World over, and draw in all that wide Circumference of Sin and Vice, and center it in his own Breaſt. For, whatſoever Sin a man extremely loves, and would commit, if he had opportunity, and, in the mean time, pleaſes himſelf with the Speculation of the ſame, whether ever he commits it, or no,

no, it leaves a ſtain and a guilt upon his Conſcience; and, according to the Spiritual, and ſevere Accounts of the Law, is made, in a great Reſpect, his own. So that by this means there is a kind of Tranſmigration of Sins, much like that, which *Pythagoras* held of Souls. Such an one, to be ſure, it is, as makes a man not only (according to the Apoſtle's phraſe) a *Partaker of other men's Sins*, but alſo a Deriver of the whole, entire Guilt of them to himſelf; and yet ſo, as to leave the Committer of them, as full of Guilt, as he was before.

From whence we ſee the infinitely fruitfull, and productive Power of this way of Sinning; how it can encreaſe and multiply beyond all Bounds and Meaſures of Actual Commiſſion, and how vaſtly it ſwells the Sinner's Account in an inſtant. So that a man ſhall out of all the various, and even numberleſs kinds of Villainy, acted by all the People and Nations round about him (as it were) extract one mighty, Comprehenſive guilt, and adopt it to himſelf; and ſo become chargeable with,

with, and accountable for *a World of Sin* without a Figure.

3. The third and laſt Reaſon that I ſhall aſſign, of the extraordinary Guilt, attending a man's being diſpoſed to take pleaſure in other men's Sins, ſhall be taken from the Soul's preparation, and paſſage to ſuch a diſpoſition. For that, it pre-ſuppoſes and includes in it the Guilt of many preceding Sins. For (as it has been ſhown) a man muſt have paſs'd many Periods of Sin, before he can arrive to it; and have ſerved a long Apprenticeſhip to the Devil, before he can come to ſuch a perfection, and maturity in Vice, as this imports. It is a Collection of the Guilt of a long and numerous Train of Villainies, the Compendium and Summ-Total of ſeveral particular Impieties, all united and *caſt up* into one. It is (as it were) the very Quinteſſence, and Sublimation of Vice, by which (as in the Spirit of Liquors) the Malignity of many Actions is contracted into a little compaſs, but with a greater advantage of ſtrength and force, by ſuch a Contraction.

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In a word, it is the Wickedneſs of a whole Life, diſcharging all its filth and foulneſs into this one Quality, as into a great Sink, or Common Shore. So that nothing is, or can be, ſo properly and ſignificantly called the *very Sinfulneſs of Sin*, as this. And therefore no wonder, if containing ſo many years guilt in the Bowels of it, it ſtands here ſtigmatized by the Apoſtle, as a Temper of Mind, rendring Men ſo deteſtably bad, that the Great Enemy of Mankind, the Devil himſelf neither can, nor deſires to make them worſe. I cannot, I need not ſay any more of it. It is indeed a Condition, not to be thought of (by Perſons ſerious enough to think and conſider) without the utmoſt Horror. But ſuch as truly fear God, ſhall both be kept from it, and from thoſe Sins that lead to it.

To which God, infinitely Wiſe, Holy and Juſt, be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

The

The *Second*

SERMON

PREACHED UPON

ROM. I. 32.

Who knowing the judgment of God, (that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of Death) not onely doe the ſame, but have pleaſure in them, that doe them.

THE Senſe of theſe Words I ſhew, in the preceding Diſcourſe, fell Naturally into this one Propoſition: *Viz.*

That the Guilt ariſing from a Man's delighting, or taking pleaſure in other men's Sins, or, (which is all one) in other men for their Sins, is greater than he can poſſibly contract by a Commiſſion of the ſame Sins in his own Perſon.

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The Proſecution of which, I ſtated upon theſe Three things.

Firſt, To ſhew what it is that brings a man to ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as to take pleaſure in other men's Sins.

Secondly, To ſhew the Reaſons why a man's being diſpoſed to doe ſo, comes to be attended with ſuch an extraordinary Guilt.

Thirdly and *Laſtly*, To declare what kind of Perſons are to be reckoned under this Character.

The Two firſt of which being diſpatched already, I proceed now to the *Third* and *Laſt*. Concerning which, I ſhall lay down this general Aſſertion; *That whoſoever draws others to Sin, ought to be look upon, as one delighting in thoſe Sins, that he draws them to.* For as much, as no man is brought to doe any thing, eſpecially if it be ill, or wicked, but in order to the pleaſing of himſelf by it: It being abſurd and incredible, that any one ſhould venture to damn himſelf hereafter, for that, which does not ſome way or other gratifie and pleaſe him here. But

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to draw forth this General into Particulars.

1. First of all: *Those are to be accounted to take pleasure in other men's Sins, who teach Doctrines, directly tending to engage such, as believe them in a sinfull Course.* For, there is none so compendious and efficacious a way to prepare a man for all Sin, as this: This being properly to put out the Eyes of that which is to be his Guide, by perverting his Judgment; and when that is once done, you may carry him whither you will. Chance must be his Rule, and present Appetite his Director. A man's Judgment, or Conscience, is the great Spring of all his Actions; and consequently, to corrupt or pervert this, is to derive a Contagion upon all that he does. And therefore, we see, how high a Guilt our Saviour charges upon this; in *Matth.* 5. 19. *Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*: That is, in truth shall never come thither. And we find, the great Sin of the *Pharisees* was, that they

promoted and abetted the Sins of other Men, taught the Devil's Doctrine out of *Moſes*'s Chair, and by falſe Deſcants upon the Divine Precepts, cut aſunder the binding force of them. So that, according to their wretched Comments, Men might break the Law, and yet never ſin againſt it. For, in *Matth.* 15. 5, 6. they had taught Men how *to diſhonour their Parents*, without any Violation of the Fifth Commandment. Thus they preached: And what deſign can any one imagine the Authors of ſuch Doctrines could have, but the Depravation of men's Manners! For, if ſome Men teach wicked Things, it muſt be, that others ſhould practiſe them. And, if one Man ſets another a Copy, it is, no doubt, with a purpoſe, that he ſhould write after it.

Now theſe Doctrines are of Two ſorts.

1. Such as repreſent Actions, that are in themſelves really wicked, and ſinfull, as not ſo.

2. Such as repreſent them much leſs ſinfull as to their kind or degrees, than indeed they are.

For

For the first of which; To instance in one very gross one, instead of many, take the Doctrine of those, commonly called *Antinomians*, who assert positively, That *Believers*, or *Persons regenerate, and within the Covenant of Grace, cannot Sin.* Upon which account, no wonder, if some very liberally assume to themselves the Condition and Character of Believers; for then they know, that other mighty Privilege belongs to them of course. But what? may not these *Believers* Cheat and Lye, commit Adultery, Steal, Murther, and Rebel? Why, yes: they may; and nothing is more common, than to see such *Believers* doe such things. But how then, can they escape the Charge of all that Guilt, that Naturally follows from such Enormities? Why, thus; you must in this case with great Care and Accuracy distinguish between the *Act* of Lying, and the *Sin* of Lying; the *Act* of Stealing, and the *Sin* of Stealing; and the *Act* of Rebellion, and the *Sin* of Rebellion. Now, though all these *Acts* are frequent and usual with such persons, yet

they are ſure (as they order the matter) never to be guilty of the *Sin*. And the Reaſon is, becauſe it is not the *Quality* of the Action that derives a Qualification upon the Perſon, ſo as to render him ſuch or ſuch, good or bad; but it is the Antecedent Quality or Condition of the Perſon that denominates his Actions, and ſtamps them Good or Evil. So that they are thoſe only who are firſt wicked, that doe wicked Actions. But Believers, and the *Godly*, though they doe the very ſame things, yet they ſo much out-wit the Devil, in the doing of them, that they never commit the ſame Sins. But, you will ſay, how came they by ſuch a great, and ſtrange Privilege? Why; they will tell you, it is, *becauſe they are not under the obliging Power of the Law*. And if you ask further; How they come to get from under that common Obligation that lies ſo hard and heavy upon all the reſt of the World? They will tell you, it is from this, That *Believers*, *inſtead of the Law*, *have the Spirit actually dwelling in them*, and by an admirable kind of inviſible *Clock-*

work

work moving them, just as a Spring does a Watch; and that immediately by himself alone, without the Mediation of any *written Law*, or *Rule* to guide, or direct, and much less to command, or oblige them. So that the *Spirit*, we see, is to be their sole Director without, and very often contrary to, the written *Law*. An excellent Contrivance, doubtless, to authorize and sanctifie the blackest, and most flagitious Actions, that can proceed from Man. For, since the Motions of the Spirit (which they so confidently suppose themselves to have) cannot so much as in things Good and Lawfull, by any certain Diagnostick, be distinguished from the Motions of a Man's own Heart, they very easily make a step further, and even in things unlawfull, conclude the Motions of their own Hearts to be the Impulse of the Spirit; and this presently alters the whole Complexion of an Action, that would otherwise look but very scurvily; and makes it absolutely pure, and unblameable, or rather perfect and meritorious. So that, let a Man have but Im-

pudence, and Wickedneſs enough to Libel his Maker, and to entitle the *Spirit of God* to all that he does, or deſires, Surnaming his own Inclinations and Appetites (though never ſo irregular and impure) the *Holy Ghoſt*; and you may, upon very ſure grounds, turn him looſe, and bid him *Sin* if he can. And thus much for the firſt ſort of Doctrines, which once believed, like the Floud-gates of Hell pulled up, lets in a Deluge and Inundation of all Sin and Vice upon the Lives of Men. And if this be the Natural *effect* of the Doctrines themſelves, we cannot, in all reaſon, but inferr, that the Intereſt of the Teachers of them muſt needs be agreeable.

2. The other ſort of Doctrines, tending to engage ſuch as believe them in a ſinfull Courſe, are ſuch as repreſent many Sins, *much leſs* as to their *Kind* or *Degree*, than indeed they are. Of which Number is that Doctrine, that aſſerts all Sins committed by Believers, or Perſons in a ſtate of Grace, to be but Infirmities. That there are ſuch things as Sins of *Infirmity*

firmity, in Contra-diſtinction to thoſe of *Preſumption*, is a Truth not to be queſtioned; but in *Hypotheſi*, to ſtate exactly which are Sins of *Infirmity*, and which are not, is not ſo eaſy a work. This is certain, that there is a vaſt difference between them; indeed, as vaſt as between *Inadvertency*, and *Deliberation*, between *Surprize* and *Set-purpoſe*: And that Perſons truly regenerate have ſinn'd this latter way, and conſequently may ſin ſo again, is as evident as the Story (already referr'd to by us) of *David*'s Murther and Adultery. Sins acted not only with deliberation, but with artifice, ſtudy, and deep contrivance. And, can Sins, that carry ſuch diſmal Marks, and black Symptoms upon them, paſs for *Infirmities*? For Sins of daily Incurſion, and ſuch as humane Frailty, and the very Condition of our Nature in this World is ſo unavoidably liable to, (for ſo are Sins of Infirmity) that a *Righteous Man may fall into them ſeventimes in a day*; and yet, according to the mercifull Tenor of the Covenant of Grace, ſtand accepted before

God is a Righteous Man ſtill? No, certainly, if ſuch are *Infirmities*, it will be hard to aſſign what are *Preſumptions*. And what a Sin-encouraging Doctrine that is, that avouches them for ſuch, is ſufficiently manifeſt from hence, That, *although* every Sin of Infirmity, in its own Nature, and according to the ſtrict Rigour of the Law, merits Eternal Death; yet it is certain from the Goſpel, that no man ſhall actually ſuffer Eternal Death barely for Sins of *Infirmity*. Which being ſo, perſwade but a man that a Regenerate perſon may Cheat and Lye, Steal, Murther and Rebel, by way of *Infirmity*, and at the ſame time, you perſwade him alſo, that he may doe all this without any danger of Damnation. And then, ſince theſe are oftentimes ſuch deſirable Priviledges to *Fleſh* and *Bloud*; and ſince withall, every Man by Nature is ſo very prone to think the beſt of himſelf, and of his own Condition; it is odds, but he will find a ſhrewd Temptation to believe himſelf *Regenerate*, rather than forbear a pleaſurable, or a profitable Sin, by thinking

that

that he ſhall go to Hell for committing it. Now this being ſuch a direct Manuduction to all kind of Sin, by abuſing the Conſcience with under-valuing Perſwaſions, concerning the Malignity and Guilt even of the fouleſt; it is evident, that ſuch as teach and promote the belief of ſuch Doctrines, are to be lookt upon as the Devil's Prophets and Apoſtles; and there is no doubt, but the guilt of every Sin, that either from Pulpit, or from Preſs, they influence Men to the Commiſſion of, does as certainly reſt upon them, and will one day be as ſeverely exacted of them, as if they had actually and perſonally committed it themſelves.

And thus I have inſtanced in two notable Doctrines, that may juſtly be lookt upon as the General In-letts, or Two great Gates, through which all Vice and Villainy ruſh in upon the Manners of Men profeſſing Religion. But the *Particulars*, into which theſe *Generals* diffuſe themſelves, you may look for, and find in thoſe well-furniſhed Magazines and Store-houſes of all Immorality and Baſeneſs

neſs, the Books and Writings of ſome Modern Caſuiſts; who, like the Devil's *Amanuenſes*, and Secretaries to the Prince of Darkneſs, have publiſhed to the World, ſuch Notions and Intrigues of Sin, out of his Cabinet, as neither the Wit, or Wickedneſs of Man, upon the bare natural Stock either of Invention or Corruption, could ever have found out.

The Writings, both of the Old and New Teſtament, make it very difficult for a Man to be *ſaved*; but the Writings of theſe Men make it more difficult, if not impoſſible, for any one to be *Damned*: For, where there is no Sin, there can be no Damnation. And, as theſe Men have obſcured and confounded the Natures and Properties of things by their falſe Principles, and wretched Sophiſtry, though an Act be never ſo ſinfull, they will be ſure to ſtrip it of its Guilt; and to make the very *Law* and *Rule* of Action ſo *pliable* and *bending*, that it ſhall be impoſſible to be *broke*. So that he, who goes to Hell, muſt paſs through a *narrower Gate* than that, which the Goſpel ſays, leads to *Hea-*

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ven. For that, we are told, is only *ſtrait*, but this is abſolutely *ſhut*; and ſo ſhut, that *Sin* cannot paſs it, and therefore it is much if a *Sinner* ſhould.

So inſufferably have theſe Impoſtors poyſoned the Fountains of Morality, perverted and embaſed the very Standard and diſtinguiſhing Rule of Good and Evil. So that all their Books and Writings are but Debauchery upon Record, and Impiety regiſtred and conſigned over to Poſterity.

In every Volume there is a Nurſery and Plantation of *Vice*, where it is ſure to thrive, and from thence to be tranſplanted into men's Practice. For, here it is manured with Art and Argument, ſheltred with Fallacy and Diſtinction, and thereby enabled both to annoy others, and to defend it ſelf.

And to ſhew how far the Malignity of this way of Sinning reaches; He, who has vented a pernicious Doctrine, or publiſhed an ill Book, muſt know, that his Guilt, and his Life, determine not together: No, ſuch an one (as the Apoſtle ſays)

ſays) *being dead, yet ſpeaketh*; He ſins in his very Grave, corrupts others, while he is rotting himſelf, and has a growing Account in the other World, after he has paid Nature's laſt Debt in this; And, in a word, quits this Life like a Man carried off by the Plague; who, though he dyes himſelf, yet does Execution upon others by a ſurviving Infection.

2. Such alſo are to be *reckoned to take pleaſure in other men's Sins, as endeavour, by all means, to allure Men to Sin*; And that either by formal Perſuaſion, Importunity, or Deſire, as we find the Harlot deſcribed, enticing the Young man, in *Prov.* 7. from *ver.* 13. to 22. Or elſe by adminiſtring Objects and Occaſions fit to enflame and draw forth a man's corrupt Affections; ſuch as are the Drinking of a cholerick, or revengefull Perſon into a fit of Rage and Violence againſt the Perſon of his Neighbour; thus heating one man's Blood, in order to the ſhedding of another's. Such alſo, as the provoking of a luſtfull, incontinent Perſon, by filthy Diſcourſe, wanton Books, and Pictures,

ctures, and, that which equals, and exceeds them all, the Incentives of the *Stage*; till a man's Vice and Folly works over all Bounds, and grows at length too mad, and out-ragious, to be either governed or concealed.

Now, with great variety of ſuch kind of Traders for Hell, as theſe, has the Nation of late years abounded. Wretches who live upon the Shark, and other men's Sins, the common Poyſoners of Youth, equally deſperate in their Fortunes, and their Manners, and getting their very Bread by the Damnation of Souls. So that if any inexperienced, young Novice, happens into the fatal Neighbourhood of ſuch Peſts, preſently they are upon him, plying his full Purſe and his empty Pate with Addreſſes ſutable to his Vanity; telling him, What pity it is, that one ſo accompliſh'd for Parts and Perſon, ſhould ſmother himſelf in the Country, where he can learn nothing of Gallantry, or behaviour; as, how to make his Court, to hector a Drawer, to cog the Dye, or ſtorm a

Whore-

Whore-houſe; but muſt of Neceſſity live and dye ignorant of what it is to Trapan, or be Trapann'd, to Sup, or rather Dine at Mid-night in a Tavern, with the Noiſe of Oaths, Blaſphemies, and Fidlers about his Ears, and to fight every Watch and Conſtable at his return from thence, and to be beaten by them: But muſt at length, poor Man! dye dully of Old age at home; when here he might ſo faſhionably and gentilely, long before that time, have been Duell'd, or Flux'd into another World.

If this be not the guiſe and practice of the Times, eſpecially as to the Principal Cities of the Kingdom, let any one judge; and whether for ſuch a poor, deluded Wretch, inſtead of growing Ruſty in the Country, (as ſome call it) to be thus brought by a Company of Indigent, Debauched, Soul-and-Body-deſtroying Harpies, to loſe his Eſtate, Family, and Vertue, amongſt them in the City, be not a much greater Violation of the publick Weal and Juſtice of any Government, than moſt of thoſe Crimes, that bring

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the Committers of them to the Gallows, we may at preſent eaſily ſee, and one day perhaps ſadly feel.

Nor is this Trade of Corrupting the young Gentry, and Nobility, and ſeaſoning them with the Vices of the Great Town, as ſoon as they ſet foot into it, carried on ſecretly, and in a corner, but openly, and in the face of the Sun; by perſons, who have formed themſelves into Companies, or rather Corporations. So that a Man may as eaſily know where to find one, to teach him to Debauch, Whore, Game, and Blaſpheme, as to teach him to Write, or Caſt Accompt: 'Tis their ſupport, and Buſineſs; nay, their very Profeſſion, and Livelihood; getting their Living by thoſe Practices, for which they deſerve to forfeit their Lives.

Now theſe are another ſort of Men, who are juſtly charged with the Guilt and Character of delighting in other men's Sins: Men, who are the Devil's Setters; who contrive, ſtudy, and beat their Brains how to draw in ſome poor, innocent

innocent, unguarded Heir into their Helliſh Net, learning his Humour, prying into his Circumſtances, and obſerving his Weak ſide; and all this to plant the Snare, and apply the Temptation effectually, and ſucceſsfully; and when by ſuch Inſinuations they have once got within him, and are able to drill him on from one Lewdneſs to another, by the ſame Arts corrupting, and ſqueezing him as they pleaſe; no wonder, if they rejoyce to ſee him guilty of all ſorts of Villainy, and take *pleaſure* in thoſe Sins, in which they find their *profit* too.

3. Such as affect the Company of Infamous, and Vitious Perſons, are alſo to be reckoned in the Number of thoſe who take pleaſure in ſuch men's Vices. For otherwiſe, what is there in ſuch Men, which they can pretend to be pleaſed with! For generally ſuch Sots have neither Parts, nor Wit, Ingenuity of Diſcourſe, nor Fineneſs of Converſation, to entertain, or delight any one, that coming into their Company, brings but his Reaſon along with him. But, on the contrary,

contrary, their rude, impertinent Loudneſs, their Quarrels, their Naſtineſs, their dull, obſcene Talk, and Ribauldry, (which from them you muſt take for *Wit*, or go without it,) cannot but be very nauſeous, and offenſive to any one, who does not baulk his own Reaſon, out of love to their Vice; and, for the ſake of the Sin it ſelf, pardon the Uglineſs of its Circumſtances: As a Father will hug and embrace his beloved Son for all the dirt and foulneſs of his Cloaths; the dearneſs of the Perſon eaſily apologizing for the diſagreeableneſs of the Habit.

One would think it ſhould be no eaſie matter to bring any Man of Senſe to love an *Alehouſe*; indeed of ſo much ſence, as *ſeeing* and *ſmelling* amounts to; there being ſuch ſtrong Encounters of both, as would quickly ſend him packing, did not the love of Good-fellowſhip reconcile him to theſe Nuſances, and the Deity he adored compound for the Homelineſs of its Shrine.

It is clear therefore, that where a Man can like and love the Converſation of lewd, debauched Perſons, amidſt all the Natural Grounds and Motives of Loathing and Diſlike; it can proceed from nothing but the inward Affection he bears to their lewd, debauched Humour. It is this, that he *enjoys*, and, for the ſake of this, the reſt he *endures*.

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, Such as encourage, countenance, and ſupport Men in their Sins, are to be reckoned in the Number of thoſe, who take pleaſure in other men's Sins. Now this may be done Two ways.

Firſt, By *Commendation*. Concerning which, we may take this for granted; That no man commends another any further than he likes him: For indeed to commend any one, is to vouch him to the World, to undertake for his Worth, and, in a word, to own the Thing which he is chiefly remarkable for. He who writes an *Encomium Neronis*, if he does it heartily, is Himſelf but a Tranſcript of *Nero* in his Mind; And would (no doubt) gladly enough

enough ſee ſuch Pranks, as he was famous for, acted again, though he dares not be the Actor of them himſelf.

From whence we ſee the Reaſon of ſome men's giving ſuch Honourable Names and Appellations to the worſt of Men and Actions, and baſe, reproachfull Titles to the beſt: Such as are calling *Faction*, and a ſpitting in their Prince's face, *Petitioning*; Fanaticiſm, and Schiſm, *True Proteſtantiſm*; Sacrilege and Rapine, *Thorough Reformation*, and the like. As, on the contrary, branding Conformity to the Rules, and Rites of the beſt Church in the World, with the falſe and odious Name of *Formality*; and traducing all Religious, Conſcientious Obſervers of them, as *Mungrel Proteſtants*, and *Papiſts in Maſquerade*. And indeed, many are, and have been, called *Papiſts* of late years, whom thoſe very perſons, who call them ſo, know to be far from being ſo. But what then do they mean, by fixing ſuch falſe Characters upon men, even againſt their own Conſciences? Why, they mean and deſign this: They would ſet ſuch

a Mark upon thoſe, whom they hate, as may cauſe their Throats to be cut, and their Eſtates to be ſeized upon, when the Rabble ſhall be let looſe upon the Government once again; which ſuch beggarly, malicious Fellows impatiently hope, and long for.

Though, I doubt not, (how much ſoever Knaves may abuſe Fools with Words for a Time,) but there will come a Day, in which the moſt Active *Papiſts* will be found under the *Puritan* Mask; and in which it will appear, that the Conventicle has been the Jeſuits ſafeſt Kennel, and the Papiſts themſelves, as well as the Fanaticks, have been Managers of all thoſe monſtrous Out-cries againſt Popery, to the Ruine of thoſe Proteſtants whom they moſt hate, and whom alone they fear. It being no unheard of Trick for a Thief, when he is cloſely purſued, to cry out, *Stop the Thief*, and thereby diverting the ſuſpicion from himſelf, to get clear away. It is alſo worth our while to conſider with what Terms of Reſpect and Commendation Knaves, and Sots will

ſpeak

ſpeak of their own Fraternity. As, *What an honeſt, what a worthy Man is ſuch an one!* And, *What a Good-natur'd Perſon is another!* According to which Terms, ſuch as are Factious, by *worthy Men*, mean only ſuch as are of the ſame Faction, and united in the ſame Deſigns againſt the Government with themſelves. And ſuch as are Brothers of the Pot, by a *Good-natur'd Perſon*, mean only a true, truſty Debauchee, who never ſtands out at a Merry-meeting, ſo long as he is able to ſtand at all; nor ever refuſes an Health, while he has enough of his own to pledge it with; and, in a word, is as *honeſt*, as Drunkenneſs and Debauchery, want of *Sence* and *Reaſon*, *Vertue* and *Sobriety*, can poſſibly make *Him*.

2*ly*. The other way by which ſome Men encourage others in their Sins, is by *Preferment*. As, when men ſhall be advanced to Places of Truſt and Honour for thoſe Qualities, that render them unworthy of ſo much as ſober, and civil Company. When a Lord, or Maſter ſhall caſt his Favours and Rewards upon

ſuch Beaſts and Blemiſhes of Society, as live only to the Diſhonour of him who made them, and the Reproach of him who maintains them. None certainly can love to ſee Vice in Power, but ſuch as love to ſee it alſo in Practice. Place and Honour do of all things moſt miſ-become it; and a Goat or a Swine, in a Chair of State, cannot be more odious, than ridiculous.

It is reported of *Cæſar*, that paſſing through a certain Town, and ſeeing all the Women of it ſtanding at their Doors with Monkeys in their Arms, he asked, whether the Women of that Country uſed to have any Children or no? thereby wittily and ſarcaſtically reproaching them, for miſplacing that Affection upon Brutes, which could only become a Mother to her Child. So, when we come into a great Family, or Government, and ſee this Place of Honour allotted to a Murtherer, another filled with an Atheiſt, or Blaſphemer, and a third with a filthy Paraſite, may we not as appoſitely, and properly ask the Queſtion, Whether there

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be any ſuch thing as Vertue, Sobriety, or Religion amongſt ſuch a People, with whom Vice wears thoſe Rewards, Honours, and Privileges, which in other Nations, the Common Judgment of Reaſon awards only to the Vertuous, the Sober, and Religious? And certainly it is too flagrant a Demonſtration, how much Vice is the Darling of any People, when many amongſt them are preferred for thoſe Practices, for which, in other places, they can ſcarce be pardoned.

And thus I have finiſhed the *Third* and *Laſt* General thing propoſed, for the handling of the Words, which was, To *ſhew the ſeveral Sorts, or Kinds of Men, which fall under the Charge and Character of taking pleaſure in other Men's Sins.*

Now the Inferences from the foregoing Particulars ſhall be Twofold.

1. Such as concern particular Perſons; And,

2. Such as concern Communities or Bodies of Men.

And firſt for the Malignity of ſuch a diſpoſition of Mind, as induces a Man to

delight in other men's Sins, with reference to the Effects of it upon particular Perſons. As,

1. It quite alters, and depraves the Natural frame of a man's Heart. For, there is that Naturally in the Heart of Man, which abhorrs Sin, as Sin; and conſequently, would make him deteſt it both in himſelf, and in others too. The firſt, and moſt genuine Principles of Reaſon, are certainly averſe to it, and find a ſecret Grief and Remorſe from every invaſion, that Sin makes upon a man's Innocence; and that muſt needs render the firſt Entrance and Admiſſion of Sin uneaſie, becauſe diſagreeable. Yet Time (we ſee) and Cuſtom of Sinning can bring a man to ſuch a paſs, that it ſhall be more difficult and grievous to him, to part with his Sin, than ever it was to him, to admit it. It ſhall get ſo far into, and lodge it ſelf ſo deep within his Heart, that it ſhall be his Buſineſs, and his Recreation, his Companion, and his other Self; and the very dividing between his Fleſh, and his Bones; or rather, between his

his Body and his Soul, ſhall be leſs terrible and afflictive to him, than to be took off from his Vice.

Nevertheleſs, as Unnatural as this Effect of Sin is, there is one yet more ſo: For, that innate Principle of Self-love, that very eaſily, and often blinds a Man, as to any impartial Reflection upon himſelf; yet, for the moſt part, leaves his Eyes open enough, to judge truly of the ſame thing in his Neighbours, and to hate that in others, which he allows and cheriſhes in himſelf. And therefore, when it ſhall come to this, that he alſo approves, embraces, and delights in Sin, as he obſerves it, even in the Perſon and Practice of other Men: this ſhews, that the Man is wholly transformed from the Creature, that God firſt made him; nay, that he has conſumed thoſe poor Remainders of Good that the Sin of *Adam* left him; that he has worn off the very remote Diſpoſitions, and Poſſibilities to Vertue, and, in a word, turned Grace firſt, and afterwards Nature it ſelf out of Doors. No man knows, at his firſt Entrance upon

on any Sin, how far it may carry him, and where it will ſtop; the Commiſſion of Sin being generally like the *pouring out of Water*, which, when once poured out, knows no other Bounds, but to run as far as it can.

2*ly*. A ſecond Effect of this Diſpoſition of Mind, is, that it peculiarly indiſpoſes a man to repent and recover himſelf from it. For the firſt ſtep to Repentance is a man's diſlike of his Sin: And how can we expect that a man ſhould conceive any through diſlike of *that*, which has took ſuch an abſolute poſſeſſion of his Heart and Affections, that he likes and loves it, not only in his own Practice, but alſo in other men's? Nay, that he is pleaſed with it, though he is paſt the Practice of it. Such a Temper of Mind, is a downright Contradiction to Repentance; as being founded in the Deſtruction of thoſe Qualities, which are the only Diſpoſitions and Preparatives to it. For, that Natural Tenderneſs of Conſcience, which muſt firſt create in the Soul a Sence of Sin, and from thence produce a Sorrow

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for it, and at length cauſe a Relinquiſhment of it; That, I ſay, (we have already ſhewn) is took away by a cuſtomary, repeated Courſe of Sinning againſt Conſcience: So that the very firſt Foundation of Vertue, which is the Natural Power of diſtinguiſhing between the Moral *Good* and *Evil* of any Action, is in effect, pluckt up and deſtroyed, And, the Spirit of God finds nothing in the Heart of ſuch an one, to apply the Means of Grace to. All Taſt, Reliſh, and Diſcernment of the Sutableneſs of Vertue, and the Unſutableneſs of Vice, being utterly gone from it.

And, as this is a direct Barr to that part of Repentance, which looks back with Sorrow and Indignation upon what is paſt; ſo is it equally ſuch, to that greater part of Repentance, which is to look forward, and to prevent Sin for the future. For, this properly delivers a man up to Sin; for as much as it leaves his Heart deſtitute of all thoſe Principles, which ſhould reſiſt it. So that ſuch an one muſt be as bad, as the Devil will have him, and can be no better, than the Devil will

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let him. In both he muſt ſubmit to his Meaſures. And what is this but a kind of Entrance into, or rather an Anticipation of Hell? What is it, but Judgment and Damnation already begun? For a man in ſuch a caſe, is as ſure of it, as if he were actually in the Flames.

3*ly*. A third Effect of this Diſpoſition of Mind, (which alſo naturally follows from the former) is, that the longer a man lives, the wickeder he grows, and his laſt days are certainly his worſt. It has been obſerved, that to delight in other men's Sins, was moſt properly the Vice of Old Age; and we ſhall alſo find, that it may be as truly and properly called *the Old Age of Vice*. For, as firſt, Old Age neceſſarily implies a man's having lived ſo many years, before it comes upon him; and withall, this ſort of Viciouſneſs ſuppoſes the precedent Commiſſion of many Sins, by which a man arrives to it; ſo it has this further property of Old Age: That, as when a man comes once to be Old, he never retreats, but ſtill goes on, and grows every day older and older;

So

So when a man comes once to ſuch a degree of Wickedneſs, as to delight in the Wickedneſs of other men, it is more than ten thouſand to one odds, if he ever returns to a better mind, but grows every day *worſe* and *worſe*. For, he has nothing elſe to take up his Thoughts, and nothing to entertain his Deſires with; which, by a long Eſtrangement from better things, come at length perfectly to loath, and fly off from them.

A notable inſtance of which we have in *Tiberius Cæſar*, who was bad enough in his youth, but ſuperlatively and monſtrouſly ſo in his Old Age: And the Reaſon of this was, Becauſe he took a particular pleaſure in ſeeing other Men doe vile and odious things. So that all his Diverſion at his Beloved *Capreæ*, was to be a Spectator of the Devil's Actors, repreſenting the worſt of Vices upon that Infamous Stage.

And therefore let not men flatter themſelves, (as, no doubt, ſome doe,) that though they find it difficult at preſent to combat and ſtand out againſt an ill Practice, and upon that account give way to

a Continuance in it; yet that Old Age ſhall do that for them, which they in their Youth could never find in their heart to doe for themſelves; I ſay, let not ſuch perſons mock and abuſe themſelves with ſuch falſe and abſurd Preſumptions. For, they muſt know, that an Habit may continue, when it is no longer able to Act; or rather the Elicit, Internal Acts of it may be quick and vigorous, when the External, Imperate Acts of the ſame Habit utterly ceaſe: And let Men but reflect upon their own Obſervation, and conſider impartially with themſelves, how few in the World they have known made better by Age. Generally they will ſee, that ſuch leave not their Vice, but their Vice leaves them; or rather retreats from their Practices, and retires into their Fancy; and that, we know, is boundleſs and infinite: And when Vice has once ſetled it ſelf there, it finds a vaſter and a wider Compaſs to Act in, than ever it had before. I ſcarce know any thing that calls for a more ſerious Conſideration from us, than this: For ſtill Men are apt

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to perſwade themſelves, that they ſhall find it an eaſie matter to grow Vertuous, as they grow Old. But it is a way of Arguing highly irrational, and fallacious. For this is a Maxim of Eternal Truth; *That nothing grows weak with Age, but that which will at length die with Age*; which Sin never does. The longer a Blot continues, the deeper it ſinks. And it will be found a Work of no ſmall difficulty to diſpoſſeſs and throw out a Vice from that Heart, where long Poſſeſſion begins to plead Preſcription. It is Naturally impoſſible for an Old Man to grow Young again; and, it is next to Impoſſible, for a decrepit, aged Sinner to become a new Creature, and *be born again.*

4*ly.* and *Laſtly*, We need no other Argument of the Malign Effects of this Diſpoſition of Mind, than this one Conſideration; That many periſh Eternally, who never arrived to ſuch a pitch of Wickedneſs, as to take any pleaſure in, or indeed to be at all concerned about the Sins of other Men. But they periſh in the purſuit of their own Luſts, and

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the Obedience they perſonally yield to their own ſinfull Appetites: And that, queſtionleſs, very often not without a conſiderable mixture of inward diſlike of themſelves for what they doe: Yet for all that, their Sin (we ſee) proving too hard for them, the over-powering Stream carries them away, and down they ſink into the Bottomleſs Pit, though under the Weight of a guilt, by vaſt degrees inferiour to that which we have been diſcourſing of. For, doubtleſs many Men are finally loſt, who yet have no men's Sins to anſwer for, but their own: Who never enticed, nor perverted others to Sin, and much leſs applauded, or encouraged them in their Sin: but only being Slaves to their own corrupt Affections, have lived and died under the killing Power of them; and ſo paſſed to a ſad Eternity.

But that other devilliſh way of Sinning, hitherto ſpoken of, is ſo far beyond this, that this is a kind of Innocence, or rather a kind of Charity, compared to it. For this is a ſolitary, ſingle, that a complicated

cated, multiplied Guilt. And indeed, if we conſider, at what a rate ſome Men ſin now-a-days; that Man ſins charitably, who Damns no body but himſelf. But the other ſort of Sinners, who may properly enough be ſaid to people Hell, and, in a very ill ſence, to *bear the Sins of many*; as they have a Guilt made up of many Guilts, ſo what can they reaſonably expect, but a Damnation equivalent to many Damnations?

And thus much for the firſt General Inference, from the foregoing Diſcourſe, ſhewing the Malignity of ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as induces a Man to delight in other men's Sins, with reference to particular Perſons.

2*ly*. The Other Inference ſhall be with reference to *Communities*, or *Bodies of Men*; and ſo ſuch a Diſpoſition has a moſt direct and efficacious Influence to *propagate*, *multiply*, and *ſpread* the Practice of any Sin, till it becomes General, and National. For this is moſt certain, that ſome men's taking pleaſure in other men's Sins, will cauſe many Men to ſin, to doe

them a pleaſure; and this will appear upon theſe three Accounts. 1. That it is ſeldom or never that any Man comes to ſuch a Degree of Impiety, as to take pleaſure in other men's Sins, but he alſo ſhews the World by his Actions, and Behaviour, that he does ſo. 2. That there are few Men in the World ſo inconſiderable, but there are ſome, or other, who have an Intereſt to ſerve by them. And, 3*ly*. That the Natural Courſe that one Man takes to ſerve his Intereſt by another, is, by applying himſelf to him in ſuch a way, as may moſt gratifie and delight him.

Now from theſe Three things put together, it is not only eaſie, but neceſſary to inferr, That ſince the Generality of Men are wholly acted by their preſent Intereſt, if they find thoſe, who can beſt ſerve them in this their Intereſt, moſt likely alſo to be gained over ſo to doe by the ſinfull and vile Practices of thoſe who addreſs to them; no doubt, ſuch Practices ſhall be purſued by ſuch Perſons, in order to the Compaſſing their deſired Ends.

Ends. Where *Greatneſs* takes no delight in *Goodneſs*, we may be ſure, there ſhall be but little Goodneſs ſeen in the Lives of thoſe, who have an Intereſt to ſerve by ſuch an one's Greatneſs. For, take any Illuſtrious, potent Sinner, whoſe Power is wholly employ'd to ſerve his Pleaſure, and whoſe chief Pleaſure is to ſee others as bad and wicked as himſelf; and there is no queſtion, but in a little time, he will alſo make them ſo; and his Dependants ſhall quickly become his Proſelytes. They ſhall Sacrifice their Vertue to his Humour, ſpend their Credit and Good name, nay, and their very Souls too, to ſerve him; and that by the worſt, and baſeſt of Services, which is, by making themſelves like Him. It is but too notorious, how long Vice has reigned, or rather raged amongſt us; and with what a *bare face*, and a *brazen forehead*, it walks about the Nation (as it were) *Elato Capite*, and looking down with Scorn upon Vertue, as a contemptible and a mean thing. Vice could not come to this pitch by chance. But we have ſinned a-pace;

and at an higher ſtrain of Villainy, than the *Fopps our Anceſtors* (as ſome are pleas'd to call them) could ever arrive to. So that we daily ſee Maturity and Age in Vice joyned with Youth, and Greenneſs of Years. A manifeſt Argument, no doubt, of the great Docility and Pregnancy of Parts, that is, in the preſent Age, above all the former.

For, in reſpect of Vice, nothing is more uſual now-a-days, than for Boys *illico naſci Senes*. They ſee their Betters delight in ill things; they obſerve Reputation, and Countenance to attend the Practice of them; and this carries them on furiouſly to that, which, of themſelves, they are but too much inclin'd to; and which Laws were purpoſely made by Wiſe men to keep them from. They are glad, you may be ſure, to pleaſe and preferr themſelves at once, and to ſerve their Intereſt and their Senſuality together.

And, as they are come to this Height and Rampancy of Vice, in a great meaſure, from the Countenance of their Bet-

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ters and Superiors; ſo they have took ſome ſteps higher in the ſame from this, That the Follies and Extravagances of the Young, too frequently carry with them the Suffrage and Approbation of the Old. For Age, which naturally and unavoidably is but one Remove from Death, and conſequently ſhould have nothing about it, but what looks like a decent Preparation for it, ſcarce ever appears of late days, but in the high Mode, the flaunting Garb, and utmoſt Gaudery of Youth; with Cloaths as ridiculouſly, and as much in the faſhion, as the Perſon that wears them is uſually grown out of it. The Eldeſt equal the Youngeſt in the Vanity of their *Dreſs*, and no other Reaſon can be given of it, but that they equal, if not ſurpaſs them in the Vanity of their *Deſires*. So that thoſe who by the Majeſty and (as I may ſo ſay) the Prerogative of their Age, ſhould even frown Youth into Sobriety, and better Manners, are now ſtriving all they can, to imitate and ſtrike in with them, and to be really *vicious*, that they may be *thought* to be *young*.

The ſad and apparent Truth of which, makes it very ſuperfluous to enquire after any further Cauſe of that monſtrous Encreaſe of Vice, that, like a Torrent, or rather a breaking in of the Sea upon us, has of late years over-flowed, and victoriouſly carried all before it. Both the Honourable, and the Aged, have contributed all they could to the promotion of it; and, ſo far as they are able, to give the beſt Colour to the worſt of things. This they have endeavoured, and thus much they have affected, That Men now ſee, that Vice makes them acceptable to thoſe, who are able to make them conſiderable. It is the Key that lets them into their very Heart, and enables them to command all that is there. And if this be the Price of Favour, and the Market of Honour, no doubt, where the Trade is ſo quick, and withall ſo certain, Multitudes will be ſure to follow it.

This is too manifeſtly our preſent Caſe. All men ſee it; and wiſe and good Men lament it: And, where Vice puſh'd on with ſuch mighty Advantages, will ſtop

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its progreſs, it is hard to judge: It is certainly above all humane Remedies to controll the prevailing Courſe of it; unleſs the great Governour of the World, who quells the Rage and Swelling of the Sea, and *ſets Barrs and Doors to it, beyond which the proudeſt of its Waves cannot paſs*, ſhall, in his infinite Compaſſion to us, doe the ſame to that *Ocean of Vice*, which now *ſwells*, and *roars*, and *lifts up it ſelf* above all Banks and Bounds of humane Laws; and ſo, by his Omnipotent Word, reducing its Power, and abaſing its Pride, ſhall at length ſay to it, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no further.* Which God in his good time effect.

To whom be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

Natural Religion, without *Revelation*,

SHEWN

Only ſufficient to render a Sinner inexcuſable.

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED

On *ROMANS* I. 20.

Before the Univerſity at *Chriſt-Church*, Oxon, on *Novemb.* 2. 1690.

ROM. I. 20. latter Part.

-----So that they are without excuſe.

THis excellent Epiſtle, though, in the Front of it, it bears a *particular* Inſcription, yet, in the Driſt and Purpoſe of it, is *Univerſal*; as deſigning to

to convince all Mankind (whom it ſuppoſes in purſuit of True Happineſs) of the Neceſſity of ſeeking for it in the Goſpel, and the Impoſſibility of finding it elſewhere. All, without the Church, at that time, were comprehended under the Diviſion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, called here by the Apoſtle *Greeks*; the Nobler and more Noted part being uſed for the whole. Accordingly, from the 2d. *Chapter*, down along, he Addreſſes himſelf to the *Jews*, ſhewing the Inſufficiency of *their Law* to juſtifie, or make them happy, how much ſoever they doated upon it. But here, in this firſt Chapter, he deals with the *Greeks* or *Gentiles*, who ſought for, and promiſed themſelves the ſame Happineſs from the Dictates of *Right Reaſon*, which the *Jews* did from the *Moſaick Law*. Where, after he had took an account of what their bare Reaſon had taught them in the Things of God, and compared the Super-ſtructure with the Foundation, their Practice with their Knowledge, he finds them ſo far from arriving at the *Happineſs*, which they aſpired to by this means,

means, that upon a full ſurvey of the whole matter, the Reſult of all comes to this ſad, and deplorable Iſſue, That they were ſinfull, and miſerable, and *that without excuſe.* In the Words, taken with the Coherence of the precedent, and ſubſequent Verſes, we have theſe Four Things conſiderable.

I. The *Sin* here followed upon a certain ſort of Men, with this ſo ſevere a Judgment; namely, That *knowing God, they did not glorifie him as God*, ver. 21.

II. The *Perſons* guilty of this Sin; They were *ſuch as profeſſed themſelves Wiſe*, ver. 22.

III. The *Cauſe*, or *Reaſon* of their falling into this Sin; which was their *holding the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, ver. 18. *And*,

IV. and *Laſtly*, The *Judgment*, or rather the *State, and Condition penally conſequent* upon theſe Sinners; namely, *That they were without excuſe*, ver. 20.

Of each of which in their Order: And firſt, for the firſt of them.

The Sin here followed with ſo ſevere a Judgment,

Judgment, and ſo highly aggravated, and condemned by the Apoſtle, is, by the united Teſtimony of moſt Divines upon this place, the Sin of *Idolatry:* Which the Apoſtle affirms to conſiſt in this; *That the Gentiles glorified not God, as God.* Which *General* Charge he alſo draws forth into *Particulars*; As, That they *changed his Glory into the Similitude and Images of Men, and Beaſts, and Birds*; where, by *Glory*, he means *God's Worſhip*, to wit, that, by which Men glorifie him, and not the *Eſſential Glory* of his Nature; it being ſuch a Glory, as was in Men's power to *change*, and to debaſe; and therefore muſt needs conſiſt, either in thoſe Actions, or thoſe Means, which they performed the Divine Worſhip by. I know no place, from which we may more clearly gather, what the Scripture accounts *Idolatry*, than from this Chapter. From whence, that I may repreſent to you, what *Idolatry* is, and wherein one ſort of it (at leaſt) does conſiſt, you may obſerve, that the Perſons, who are here charged with it, are poſitively affirmed

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to have known, and acknowledged the True God. For, it is ſaid of them, that they knew his *Eternal Power*, and *Godhead*, in this 20th. Verſe; nay, and they *worſhipped* him too. From whence this undeniably, and invincibly follows, That they did not *look upon* thoſe *Images*, which they addreſſed to, as *Gods*, nor as Things, in which the Divine Nature did, or could *encloſe* it ſelf; nor, conſequently, to which they gave, or ultimately deſigned their Religious Worſhip. This Concluſion therefore I inferr, and aſſert; That *Idolatry* is not only an Accounting, or Worſhipping that for God, which is not God, but it is alſo a Worſhipping the True God, in a way wholly unſutable to his Nature; and particularly, by the Mediation of Images, and Corporeal Reſemblances of Him. This is Idolatry: For the Perſons here ſpoken of, pretended *to glorifie the true God, but they did not glorifie him, as God*, and upon that account ſtand arraigned for *Idolaters*. Common Sence, and Experience, will, and muſt evince the Truth of this. For,

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can any one imagine, that Men of Reaſon, who had their Senſes quick, and their Wits and Diſcourſe entire, could take that *Image*, or *Statue*, which they fell down before, to be a *God*? Could they think that to be *Infinite and Immenſe*, the Ubiquity of which they could thruſt into a corner of their Cloſet? Or, could they conceive that to be *Eternal*, which, a few days before, they had ſeen a Log, or a Rude Trunk, and perhaps the other piece of it a Joynt-ſtool in the Workman's Shop?

The Ground, and Reaſon of all *Worſhip*, is an Opinion of *Power*, and *Will* in the Perſon worſhipped, to anſwer and ſupply our Deſires; which he cannot poſſibly doe, unleſs he firſt apprehend them. But, can any Man, who is Maſter of Senſe himſelf, believe the Rational Heathens ſo void of it, as to think, that thoſe *Images* could fulfill the Petitions, which they could not hear, pity the Wants they could not ſee, doe all Things, when they could not ſtir an hand, or a foot? 'Tis impoſſible they ſhould; but it is alſo certain, that they were *Idolaters*. And,

And, therefore it is clear, that their Idolatry conſiſted in ſomething elſe, and the Hiſtory of it would demonſtrate ſo much, were it proper to turn a Sermon into an Hiſtory. So that we ſee here, that the Sin condemned in the Text, was the *Worſhipping of the True God by Images*. For the Defence of which, there is no doubt, but they might have pleaded, and did plead for thoſe *Images*, that they uſed them not as *Objects*, but only as *Means*, and Inſtruments of Divine Worſhip, not as *what they worſhipped*, but as *that, by which they directed their Worſhip to God*. Though ſtill, me-thinks, it is ſomething hard to conceive, that none of the Worſhip ſhould fall upon the Image, by the way, or that the Water can be conveyed into the Sea, without ſo much as wetting the Channel through which it paſſes. But however you ſee, it requires a very diſtinguiſhing Head, and an even Hand, and no ſmall Skill in *directing the Intention*, to carry a Prayer quite through to its Journey's end: Though, after all, the Miſchief of it is, that the *Diſtinction*, which

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which looks ſo fine in the *Theory*, generally miſcarries in the *Practice*; eſpecially where the Ignorant Vulgar are the *Practicers*, who are the worſt in the World at diſtinguiſhing, but yet make far the greateſt part of Mankind, and are as much concerned, and obliged to pray, as the wiſeſt, and the beſt; but withall, infinitely unhappy, if they cannot perform a Neceſſary Duty, without *School-diſtinctions*, nor beg their *daily Bread* without *Metaphyſicks*. And thus much for the *firſt Thing propoſed*; namely, *the Sin here ſpoken againſt by the Apoſtle in the Text*; which was *Idolatry*.

2. The ſecond *is the Perſons charged with this Sin*. And they were not the *Gnoſticks*, as ſome whimſically imagine, who can never meet with the Words γινώσκοντες, γινώσκειν, γνῶσις, γνωστὸν, but preſently the *Gnoſticks* muſt be drawn in by Head and Shoulders; but the Perſons here meant, were plainly and manifeſtly the Old Heathen Philoſophers; ſuch as not only in the *Apoſtles*, but alſo in their *own phraſe, profeſſed themſelves to be wiſe*. Their great

great Title was Σοφοὶ, and the word of Applauſe ſtill given to their Lectures, was σοφὸς. And *Pythagoras* was the firſt, who abated of the Invidiouſneſs of the Name, and from σοφὸς, brought it down to φιλόσοφος, from a *Maſter*, to a *Lover* of *Wiſdom*, from a Profeſſor, to a Candidate.

Theſe were the Men here intended by St. *Paul*; *Men* famous in their reſpective Ages; the great Favourites of Nature, and the Top, and Maſter-piece of Art; *Men*, whoſe aſpiring Intellectuals had raiſed them above the Common Level, and made them *higher by the Head* than the World round about them. *Men* of a Polite Reaſon, and a Notion refined, and enlarged by Meditation. *Such*, as with all theſe Advantages of Parts and Study, had been toiling, and plodding many years, to out-wit and deceive themſelves; ſat up many Nights, and ſpent many Days to impoſe a Fallacy upon their Reaſon; and, in a word, ran the Round of all the Arts and Sciences to arrive at length at a glorious and elaborate Folly; even theſe, I ſay, theſe Grandees, and

Giants in Knowledge, who thus *look'd down* (as it were) upon the reſt of Mankind, and laughed at all beſides themſelves, as *Barbarous* and Inſignificant, (as quick and ſagacious, as they were, to look into the little Intrigues of *Matter* and *Motion*, which a Man might *Salvâ Scientiâ*, or at leaſt, *Salvâ animâ ignorare*,) yet blunder'd, and ſtumbl'd about their grand and principal Concern, the *knowledge of their Duty to God*, ſinking into the meaneſt and moſt ridiculous Inſtances of *Idolatry*; even ſo far, as to Worſhip the great God under the form of *Beaſts, and creeping things*; to adore Eternity, and Immenſity in a Brute, or a Plant, or ſome viler thing; bowing down, in their Adoration, to ſuch Things, as they would ſcarce otherwiſe have bowed down *to take up*. Nay, and to rear Temples, and make Altars to *Fear*, *Luſt*, and *Revenge*; there being ſcarce a corrupt Paſſion of the Mind, or a Diſtemper of the Body, but what they *Worſhipp'd*. So that it could not be expected, that they ſhould ever *repent* of thoſe Sins,

which

which they thought fit to *Deifie*, nor *Mortifie* thoſe corrupt Affections, to which they aſcribed a kind of *Divinity*, and *Immortality*. By all which, they fell into a greater Abſurdity in Matter of *Practice*, than ever any one of them did, in Point of *Opinion*, (which yet certainly was very hard,) namely, *That having confeſſed a God*, and allowed him the Perfections *of a God*, to wit, an *Infinite Power*, and an *Eternal Godhead*, they yet denied him the *Worſhip of God*: Thus reverſing the Great Truths, they had ſubſcribed to in *Speculation*, by a brutiſh, ſenſleſs Devotion, manag'd with a greater Proſtration of Reaſon, than of Body.

Had the poor, vulgar Rout only, who were held under the Prejudices, and Pre-poſſeſſions of Education, been abuſed, into ſuch Idolatrous Superſtitions, as to adore a Marble, or a Golden Deity, it might have been deteſted indeed, or pitied, but not ſo much to be wonder'd at: But for the *Stoa*, the *Academy*, or the *Peripaton* to own ſuch a Paradox; for an *Ariſtotle*, or a *Plato* to think their Νοῦς ἀιδιος,

their *Eternal Mind*, or *Univerſal Spirit*, to be found in, or ſerved by the Images of *four-footed Beaſts*; For the *Stagirite* to recognize his Gods in his own Book *de Animalibus*; This (as the Apoſtle ſays) *was without excuſe*: And how will theſe Men anſwer for their Sins, who ſtand thus Condemned for their Devotions? And thus from the *Perſons here charged by the Apoſtle with the Sin of Idolatry*, paſs we now to the

3d. *Thing propoſed*; namely, *the Cauſe, or Reaſon of their falling into this Sin*; *and that was their holding of the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*. For the making out of which, we muſt enquire into theſe Two things.

1. What was the *Truth* here ſpoken of.

2. How they *held it in Unrighteouſneſs*.

For the firſt of them; there were *theſe ſix great Truths*, the knowledge of which, the Gentile Philoſophers ſtood accountable for: As,

1. That there was *a God*; a Being diſtinct from this *viſible*, *material* World; infinitely

infinitely Perfect, Omniſcient, Omnipotent, Eternal, Tranſcendently Good and Holy. For all this is included in the very Notion of a God. And this was a Truth wrote with a Sun-beam, clear and legible to all Mankind, and *received by* Univerſal Conſent.

2. That this God was the *Maker* and *Governour* of this *viſible World*. The firſt of which was evident from the very *Order of Cauſes*; the great Argument, by which Natural Reaſon evinces a God. It being neceſſary in ſuch an *Order or Chain of Cauſes*, to aſcend to, and terminate in *ſome Firſt*. Which ſhould be the Original of Motion, and the Cauſe of all other Things, but It ſelf be cauſed by none. And then, That God alſo *governed* the World, this followed from the other; For that a Creature ſhould not depend upon its Creator in all reſpects, in which it is capable of depending upon Him, (amongſt which, to be *governed* by Him, is certainly one) is contrary to the Common Order, and Nature of things, and thoſe Eſſential Relations, which (by ver-

tue thereof) they bear to one another; and conſequently Abſurd and Impoſſible. So that upon a bare Principle of Reaſon, *Creation* muſt needs inferr *Providence*; and God's *making* the World, irrefragably prove that he *governs* it too; or, that a Being of a *Dependent* Nature, remains never the leſs *Independent* upon Him in that reſpect. Beſides all which, it is alſo certain, that the Heathens did actually acknowledge the World governed by a Supreme Mind; which knowledge, whether they had it from Tradition, or the Diſcourſes of Reaſon, they ſtood however *equally accountable* for, upon either account.

3*ly*. That this God, or Supreme Being, was to be *Worſhipped*. For this was founded upon his *Omnipotence*, and his *Providence*. Since He, who could preſerve, or deſtroy, as he pleaſed, and withall governed the World, ought ſurely to be depended upon by thoſe, who were thus obnoxious to his Power, and ſubject to his Government; which *Dependence* could not manifeſt it ſelf, but by Acts of *Worſhip*,

Homage,

Homage, and *Addreſs* to the Perſon thus depended upon.

4*ly*. That this God was to be Worſhipped, or Addreſſed to, by Vertuous and Pious Practices. For ſo much his Eſſential Holineſs required, and thoſe Innate Notions of *Turpe & Honeſtum*, wrote in the Conſciences of all Men, and joyned with the Apprehenſions, they had, of the Infinite Purity of the Divine *Nature*, could not but ſuggeſt.

5*ly*. That upon any Deviation from Vertue and Piety, it was the Duty of evey *Rational Creature* ſo deviating, to condemn, renounce, and be ſorry for every ſuch Deviation: That is, in other words, *to repent of it*. What indeed, the Iſſue or Effect of ſuch a Repentance might be, bare Reaſon could not of it ſelf diſcover; but that a *peccant Creature* ſhould diſapprove, and repent of every Violation of, and Declination from the Rules of *Juſt* and *Honeſt*, this, Right Reaſon, diſcourſing upon the Stock of its own Principles, could not but Inferr. And the Conſcience of every Man, before it is debauched, and

hardned by Habitual Sin, will *recoil* after the doing of an Evil Action, and *acquit him* after a Good.

6*ly*. and *Laſtly*, That every ſuch Deviation from *Duty*, rendred the Perſon ſo deviating liable, and obnoxious to *Puniſhment*. I do not ſay, that it made Puniſhment *neceſſary*, but that it made the Perſon ſo tranſgreſſing, *worthy* of it; So that it might juſtly be inflicted on him, and conſequently ought rationally to be feared, and expected by him. And upon this Notion, univerſally fixed in the Minds of Men, were grounded all their *Sacrifices*, and *Rites* of *Expiation*, and *Luſtration*. The uſe of which has been ſo General, both as to Times, and Places, that there is no Age or Nation of the World, in which they have not been uſed, as Principal Parts of Religious Worſhip.

Now theſe *ſix Grand Truths* were the *Talent* entruſted, and depoſited by God in the hands of the *Gentiles* for them to Traffick with, to his Honour, and their own Happineſs. But what little Improvement

provement they made of this *Noble Talent*, ſhall now be ſhewn in the next Particular; namely, *Their holding of it in Unrighteouſneſs*. Which they did ſeveral ways. As,

1. *By not Acting up to what they knew.* As in many Things their *Knowledge* was ſhort of the *Truth*, ſo, almoſt in all Things, their *Practice* fell ſhort of their *Knowledge*. The Principles by which they *walked*, were as much below thoſe by which they *judged*, as their *Feet* were below their *Head*. By the one they looked *upwards*, while they placed the other *in the Dirt*. Their Writings ſufficiently ſhew, what raiſed, and ſublime Notions they had of the Divine Nature, while they employed their Reaſon about that Glorious Object, and what Excellent Diſcourſes of Vertue and Morality the ſame Reaſon enabled them to furniſh the World with. But when they came to tranſcribe theſe *Theories* into *Practice*; One ſeemed to be of no other uſe to them at all, but only to reproach them for the Other. For, they neither depended

pended upon this God, as if he were *Almighty*, nor worſhipped him, as if they believed him *Holy*; but in both prevaricated with their own Principles, to that degree, that their *Practice* was a direct Contradiction to their *Speculations*. For the proof of which, go over all the Heathen *Temples*, and take a ſurvey of the Abſurdities, and Impieties of their *Worſhip*, their monſtrous Sacrifices, their ridiculous Rites, and Ceremonies. In all which, Common Sence and Reaſon, could not but tell them, that the *Good* and *Gracious God* could not be *pleaſed*, nor conſequently *worſhipped*, with any thing *Barbarous* or *Cruel*; nor the moſt *Holy God* with any thing *Filthy* and *Unclean*; nor a God *infinitely Wiſe* with any thing *Sottiſh* or *Ridiculous*; and yet theſe were the worthy Qualifications of the Heathen Worſhip, even amongſt their Greateſt, and moſt reputed Philoſophers.

And then, for the *Duties of Morality*; ſurely, they never wanted ſo much knowledge as to inform, and convince them of the unlawfulneſs of a man's being *a Murtherer*,

Murtherer, *an Hater of God*, *a Covenant-breaker*, *without Natural Affection*, *Implacable*, *Unmercifull*. These were Enormities, branded and condemned by the *first*, and *most Natural* Verdict of Common *Humanity*; and so very gross and foul, that no man could pretend Ignorance, that they ought to be avoided by him: And yet the Apostle tells us, in the last Verse of this Chapter, That they *practised* so much short of their *knowledge*, even as to these Particulars, *That though they knew the Judgment of God, that those who committed such things, were worthy of Death; yet, not only did the same themselves, but also had pleasure in those that did them.* Which certainly is the greatest Demonstration of a Mind wholly possessed, and even besotted with the Love of Vice, that can possibly be imagined. So notoriously did these Wretches baulk the Judgment of their Consciences, even in the plainest, and most undeniable Duties relating to God, their Neighbour, and *themselves*; as if they had owned neither God, nor Neighbour, but *themselves*.

2*ly*.

2*ly*. Theſe *Men held the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs, by not improving thoſe known Principles, into the proper Conſequences deducible from them.* For ſurely, had they diſcourſed rightly but upon this one Principle; That God was a *Being infinitely perfect*, they could never have been brought to aſſert, or own a Multiplicity of Gods. For, can *one God* include in him all Perfection, and another God include in him *all Perfection* too? Can there be any more than all? And if this All be in one, can it be alſo in another? Or, if they allot, and parcel out ſeveral Perfections, to ſeveral Deities, doe they not, by this, aſſert Contradictions, making a *Deity* only to ſuch a meaſure perfect; whereas a *Deity*, as ſuch, implies Perfection beyond all Meaſure, or Limitation? Nor could they, in the next place, have ſlid into thoſe brutiſh Immoralities of Life, had they duly manured thoſe firſt Practical Notions, and Dictates of Right Reaſon, which the Nature of Man is Originally *furniſh'd* with; there being not any one

of

of them, but what is *naturally* productive of many more. But they quickly ſtifled, and *over-laid* thoſe *Infant-principles*, thoſe Seeds of Piety and Vertue, ſown by God and Nature in their Hearts; ſo that they brought a voluntary Darkneſs and Stupidity upon their Minds; and, by not, *Exerciſing their Senſes to diſcern between Good and Evil*, came at length to loſe all Senſe and Diſcernment of either. Whereupon, as the Apoſtle ſays of them, in the 21ſt. Verſe of this Chapter to the *Romans*, *Their fooliſh Heart was darkned*: And that, not only by the Juſt Judgment of God, but alſo by the very Courſe of Nature; Nothing being more evident from Experience, than that the not uſing or imploying any Faculty, or Power either of Body, or Soul, does inſenſibly weaken, and impair that Faculty; As a Sword by long lying ſtill will contract a Ruſt, which ſhall not only deface its *Brightneſs*, but by degrees, alſo, conſume its very *Subſtance*. *Doing* Nothing, naturally ends in *being* Nothing.

It

It holds in all Operative Principles whatſoever; but eſpecially in ſuch as relate to Morality; in which, *not to proceed*, is certainly *to go backward*; there being *no third Eſtate*, between *not advancing*, and *retreating* in a vertuous Courſe. Growth is of the very Eſſence, and Nature of ſome Things. *To be*, and to *Thrive*, is all one with them; and they know no middle Seaſon between their *Spring*, and their *Fall*.

And therefore, as it is ſaid in *Matth.* 13. 12. *That from him, who hath not, ſhall be taken away even that which he hath.* So he, who neglects the *Practice*, ſhall, in the end alſo, loſe the very *Power* and Faculty of Doing well. That which ſtops a man's *Actual Breathing* very long, will, in the Iſſue, take away his very Power of Breathing too. To hide one's *Talent* in the ground, is to *bury* it; and the *Burial* of a Thing either finds it *dead*, or will quickly *make it ſo*.

3*ly*. Theſe Men *held the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs, by concealing what they knew.* For, how rightly ſoever they might con-

ceive

ceive of *God*, and of *Vertue*, yet the illiterate Multitude, who, in ſuch things, muſt ſee with better Eyes than their own, or not ſee at all, were never the wiſer for it. Whatſoever the inward Sentiments of thoſe *Sophiſters* were, they kept them wholly to themſelves; hiding all thoſe important Truths, all thoſe uſefull Notions from the People, and teaching the World much otherwiſe from what they judged themſelves. Though I think a greater Truth than this cannot well be uttered; That never any Thing, or Perſon was really good, which was good only to it ſelf. But from hence it was, That, even in a Literal ſenſe, *Sin* came *to be Eſtabliſhed by a Law*. For, amongſt the *Gentiles*, the *Laws* themſelves were the greateſt *Offenders*. They made little or no proviſion for Vertue, but very much for Vice: For, the Early, and Univerſal Practice of Sin, had turned it into a *Cuſtom*, and *Caſtom*, eſpecially in *Sin*, quickly paſſed into *Common Law*.

Socrates was the only *Martyr* for the Teſtimony of any Truth, that we read of amongſt

amongſt the *Heathens*; who choſe rather to be Condemned, and to die, than either to renounce, or conceal his Judgment, touching the Unity of the Godhead. But as for the reſt of them, even *Zeno*, and *Chryſippus*, *Plato*, and *Ariſtotle*, and generally all thoſe *Heroes* in Philoſophy, they ſwam with the Stream, (as foul as it ran,) leaving the poor Vulgar as Ignorant and Sottiſh, as Vicious and Idolatrous as they firſt found them.

But it has been always the Practice of the *Governing Cheats* of all Religions, to keep the People in as groſs Ignorance, as poſſibly they could. For (we ſee) the *Heathen Impoſtors* uſed it before the *Chriſtian Impoſtors* took it up, and improved it. *Si populus decipi vult, decipiatur*, was ever a *Gold* and *Silver Rule* amongſt them all; though the Pope's Legate firſt turned it into a *Benediction*: And a very ſtrange one it was, and *enough* (one would think) to have made all that heard it look about them, and begin to *bleſs themſelves*. For as *Demetrius*, a great Maſter in ſuch Arts, told his Fellow-Artiſts, *Acts* 19. 25.

25. *It was by this Craft, that they got their Wealth.* So, long experience has found it true of the *unthinking Mobile*; That the *closer* they ſhut their *Eyes*, the *wider* they open their *Hands*. But this baſe Trade, the Church of *England* always abhorr'd; and for that Cauſe, as to its Temporal Advantages, has fared accordingly; and, by this time, may be thought fit for *another Reformation.*

And thus I have ſhewn Three notable ways, by which the *Philoſophers, and learned Men amongſt the Gentiles*, held the Truth in *Unrighteouſneſs*: As, firſt, *That they did not Practiſe up to it*; 2ly. *That they did not Improve it*; And, 3ly. and Laſtly, *That they Concealed, and Diſſembled it.* And this was that, which prepared and diſpoſed them to greater Enormities: *For, changing the Truth of God into a Lye*, they became like thoſe, who, by often repeating a Lye to others, come at length to believe it themſelves. They owned the Idolatrous Worſhip of God ſo long, till, by degrees, even in ſpight of *Reaſon* and *Nature*, they thought that

he ought ſo to be Worſhipp'd. But this ſtopp'd not here: For, as one Wickedneſs is naturally a ſtep and introduction to another; ſo from abſurd and ſenſeleſs Devotions, they paſſed into *vile Affections*. Practiſing Vices againſt Nature, and that, in ſuch ſtrange and abominable Inſtances of Sin, that Nothing could equal the Corruption of their *Manners*, but the Deluſion of their *Judgments*; both of them the true and proper Cauſes of one another.

The Conſideration of which (one would think) ſhould make Men cautious, and fearfull, how they *ſuppreſs*, or debauch that *Spark* of *Natural light*, which God has ſet up in their Souls. When Nature *is in the Dark*, it will venture to doe any thing.—And, God knows, how far the *Spirit* of Infatuation may prevail upon the Heart, when it comes once to Court, and Love a Deluſion. Some Men hug an Error, becauſe it gratifies them in a freer Enjoyment of their Senſuality: And for that Reaſon, God in Judgment, ſuffers them to be plunged into

into fouler, and groſſer Errors; ſuch as even unman, and ſtrip them of the very Principles of Reaſon, and ſober Diſcourſe. For, ſurely, it could be no ordinary Declenſion of Nature, that could bring ſome Men, after an ingenuous Education in Arts, and Philoſophy, to place their *Summum Bonum* upon their Trenchers, and their utmoſt felicity in Wine and Women, and thoſe Luſts, and Pleaſures, which a *Swine*, or a *Goat*, has as full, and quick a ſenſe of, as the greateſt States-man, or the beſt Philoſopher in the World.

Yet, this was the Cuſtom, this the known Voice of moſt of the *Gentiles*; *Dum vivimus vivamus*; *Let us eat and drink to day, for to morrow we muſt die.* That Soul which God had given them Comprehenſive of both Worlds, and capable of looking into the great Myſteries of Nature, of Diving into the Depths beneath, and of underſtanding the Motions, and Influences of the Stars above; even this glorious, active Thing did they confine within the pitifull Compaſs of the

preſent Fruition; forbidding it to take a proſpect, ſo far, as into the *morrow*; as if to Think, to Contemplate, or be Serious, had been *High Treaſon* againſt the Empire and Prerogative of *Senſe*, uſurping the Throne of their baffled and depoſed *Reaſon*.

And how comes it to paſs, that even now-a-days, there is often ſeen ſuch a vaſt Difference between the *former*, and the *latter* part of ſome men's Lives? That thoſe, who firſt ſtepp'd forth into the World, with high, and promiſing Abilities, vigorous Intellectuals, and clear Morals, come at length to grow Sots, and Epicures, mean in their Diſcourſes, and dirty in their Practices; but that, as by degrees, they remitted of their Induſtry, loathed their Buſineſs, and gave way to their Pleaſures, they let fall thoſe generous Principles, which, in their youthfull days, had born them upon the Wing, and raiſed them to worthy and great Thoughts; which *Thoughts* and *Principles*, not being kept up, and cheriſhed, but ſmothered in Senſual Delights,

lights, God, for that Cauſe, ſuffered them to flag and ſink into low and inglorious Satisfactions, and to enjoy themſelves more in a *Revel*, or a *Merry-meeting*, a *Strumpet*, or a *Tavern*, than in being uſefull to a Church, or a Nation, in being a Publick good to Society, and a benefit to Mankind. The Parts, that God gave them, they *held in Unrighteouſneſs*, Sloth, and Senſuality; and this made God to deſert, and abandon them to themſelves; ſo that they have had a *doating* and a *decrepit* Reaſon, long before Age had given them ſuch a *Body*.

And therefore, I could heartily wiſh, that ſuch young Perſons, as hear me now, would lodge this one Obſervation deep in their Minds; *viz.* That God, and Nature, have joyned *Wiſdom*, and *Vertue*, by ſuch a near Cognation, or rather, ſuch an inſeparable Connexion, that a wiſe, a prudent, and an honourable *Old Age*, is ſeldom, or never found, but as the *Reward*, and *Effect* of a ſober, a vertuous, and a well-ſpent *Youth*.

4. I deſcend now to the *Fourth* and *Laſt* Thing propoſed; namely, the *Judgment, or rather the State and Condition penally conſequent upon the Perſons here charged by the Apoſtle with Idolatry*; which is, *That they were without excuſe.*

After the Commiſſion of Sin, it is natural for the Sinner to aprehend himſelf in Danger, and, upon ſuch apprehenſion, to provide for his Safety, and Defence: And that muſt be one of theſe Two ways: *viz.* Either by *pleading his Innocence, or by uſing his Power.* But ſince it would be infinitely in vain for a *Finite* Power to contend with an *Infinite*; *Innocence* (if any thing) muſt be his Plea; and that muſt be, either by an Abſolute Denial; or, at leaſt, by an Extenuation, or Diminution of his Sin. Though indeed this Courſe will be found altogether as abſurd as the other could be; it being every-whit as irrational for a Sinner to plead his *Innocence* before *Omniſcience*, as it would be to oppoſe his *Power* to *Omnipotence.* However, the laſt Refuge of a guilty Perſon, is to take ſhelter under

under an *Excuſe*; and ſo to mitigate, if he cannot divert the Blow. It was the method of the great Pattern and Parent of all Sinners, *Adam*, firſt to *hide*, and then to *excuſe* himſelf; to wrap the *Apple* in the *leaves*, and to give his Caſe a Gloſs at leaſt, though not a Defence. But now, when the Sinner ſhall be ſtripp'd of this alſo, have all his Excuſes blown away, be ſtabb'd with his own Arguments, and (as it were) ſacrificed upon that very *Altar*, which he fled to for *ſuccour*, this, ſurely, is the height, and *criſis* of a forlorn Condition. Yet this was the Caſe of the Malefactors, who ſtand here arraigned *in the Text*; this was the Conſummation of their Doom, That they were Perſons, not only unfit for a *Pardon*, but even for a *Plea*.

Now an *Excuſe*, in the Nature of it, imports theſe Two things.

1. The Suppoſition of a Sin.
2. The Extenuation of its Guilt.

As for the Sin it ſelf; we have already heard what that was, and we will now ſee how able they are to acquit them-

ſelves in point of its *Extenuation.* In which, according to the Two grand Principles of humane Actions, which determine their Morality, the *Underſtanding* and the *Will*, the Excuſe muſt derive either from *Ignorance* or *Unwillingneſs.*

As for *Unwillingneſs*, (to ſpeak of this laſt firſt,) the Heathen Philoſophers generally aſſerted *the Freedom of the Will*, and its inviolable Dominion over its own Actions; ſo that no force or coaction from without could entrench upon the abſolute Empire of this Faculty.

It muſt be confeſſed indeed, that it has been ſomething lamed in this its *Freedom* by Original Sin: Of which Defect, the Heathens themſelves were not wholly ignorant, though they were of its Cauſe. So that hereupon, the Will is not able to carry a man out to a *choice* ſo perfectly, and in all reſpects Good, but that ſtill, there is ſome adherent Circumſtance of Imperfection, which, in ſtrictneſs of *Morality*, renders every Action of it Evil; according to that known, and moſt true Rule, *Malum ex quolibet defectu.* Never-

Nevertheleſs, the Will has ſtill ſo much *Freedom* left, as to enable it to chuſe any Act *in its kind Good*, whether it be an Act of *Temperance*, *Juſtice*, or the like; as alſo to refuſe any Act in its *kind Evil*, whether of *Intemperance*, *Injuſtice*, or the like; though yet, it neither *chuſes* One, nor *refuſes* the Other, with ſuch a perfect Concurrence of all due Ingredients of Action, but that ſtill, in the ſight of God, judging according to the rigid Meaſures of the Law, every ſuch *Choice*, or *Refuſal*, is indeed ſinfull, and imperfect. This is moſt certain, whatſoever *Pelagius* and his Brethren aſſert to the contrary.

But however, that meaſure of *Freedom* which the Will ſtill retains, of being able to chuſe any *Act*, *materially*, *and in its kind Good*; and to refuſe the contrary, was enough to cut off all Excuſe from the Heathen, who never duely improved the utmoſt of ſuch a Power, but gave themſelves up to all the Filthineſs, and Licentiouſneſs of Life imaginable. In all which, it is certain, that they acted willingly,

willingly, and without *compulſion*; or rather indeed greedily, and without *controll.*

The only Perſons amongſt the Heathens, who ſophiſticated Nature and Philoſophy in this particular, were the *Stoicks*; who affirmed a fatal, unchangeable Concatenation of Cauſes, reaching even to the Elicit Acts of Man's Will. So that according to them, there was no *Act of Volition* Exerted by it, but, all Circumſtances conſidered, it was impoſſible for the Will not to Exert that Volition. But theſe were but one Sect of Philoſophers; that is, but an Handfull in compariſon of the reſt of the *Gentiles*: Ridiculous enough, for what they held, and taught, and conſequently not to be laid in the Balance with the united Judgment of all other learned Men in the World, unanimouſly exploding this Opinion. Queſtionleſs therefore, a thing ſo deeply engraven upon the firſt and moſt inward Notions of man's Mind, as a Perſwaſion of the *Will's Freedom*, would never permit the *Heathens*, (who are here

here charged by the Apoſtle) to Patronize, and Excuſe their Sins upon this ſcore, *That they committed them againſt their Will, and that they had no Power to do otherwiſe.* In which, every hour's Experience, and Reflection upon the Method of their own Actings, could not but give them the Lye to their face.

The only *remaining Plea* therefore, which theſe Men can take ſanctuary in muſt be that of *Ignorance*; ſince there could be no pretence for *unwillingneſs*. But the Apoſtle diveſts them even of this alſo: For, he ſays expreſsly, in *ver.* 19. *That, what might be known of God*, that famous and ſo much diſputed of τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, was manifeſted in them; and in *ver.* 21. their *unexcuſableneſs* is ſtated upon the ſuppoſition of this very Thing; *That they knew God*, but for all that, *did not glorifie him as God.* This was the Summ of their Charge; and how it has been made good againſt them, we have already ſhewn, in what we have ſpoken about their *Idolatry*, very briefly, I confeſs; but enough to ſhew its *Abſurdity*, though

though not to account for its *Variety*; when *Voſſius*'s very Abridgment of it makes a thick Volume in *Folio*.

The *Plea of Ignorance* therefore is alſo taken out of their Hands; foraſmuch as they knew that there was a God; and that this God made, and governed the World; and upon that account was to be worſhipped, and addreſſed to; and that with ſuch a Worſhip, as ſhould be agreeable to his Nature; both in reſpect of the Piety, and Vertue of the *Worſhipper*, and alſo of the Means of the *Worſhip* it ſelf. So that he was neither to be worſhipped with impious, and immoral Practices, nor with corporeal Reſemblances. For how could an *Image* help Men in directing their Thoughts to a *Being*, which bore no Similitude, or Cognation to that *Image* at all? And what Reſemblance could *Wood*, or *Stone*, bear to a *Spirit* void of all Senſible Qualities, and bodily Dimenſions? How could they put Men in mind of *Infinite Power*, *Wiſdom* and *Holineſs*, and ſuch other Attributes, of which they had not the leaſt mark or character?

But

But now, if theſe things could not poſſibly reſemble any *Perfection* of the *Deity*, what uſe could they be of, to Men in their Addreſſes to God? For, can a man's Devotions be helped by that, which brings an Error upon his Thoughts? And certain it is, that it is natural for a Man, by directing his Prayers to an *Image*, to ſuppoſe the *Being*, he prays to, repreſented by that *Image*. Which how injurious, how contumelious it muſt needs be to the Glorious, Incomprehenſible Nature of God, by begetting ſuch falſe, and low Apprehenſions of him in the Minds of his Creature, let *Common Senſe*, not perverted by Intereſt and Deſign, be judge. From all which it follows, That the *Idolatrous Heathens*, and eſpecially the moſt learned of them, not being able to charge their Idolatry either upon *Ignorance* or *Unwillingneſs*, *were wholly without Excuſe*. So that it is to be feared, that *Averroes* had not the right way of Bleſſing himſelf, when, in defiance of Chriſtianity, he wiſhed, *Sit anima mea cum Philoſophis*.

And

And now, after all, I cannot but take notice, that all that I have ſaid of the Heathen Idolatry is ſo exactly appliable to the Idolatry of another ſort of Men in the World, that, one would think, this *firſt Chapter* of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, were not ſo much an Addreſs to the *Ancient Romans*, as a Deſcription of the *Modern*.

But to draw towards a Cloſe. The Uſe and Improvement of the foregoing Diſcourſe ſhall be briefly to inform us of theſe Two things.

1. The Signally great, and peculiar *Mercy of God* to thoſe, to whom he has Revealed the Goſpel, ſince there was nothing, that could have obliged him to it, upon the account of his *Juſtice*: For if there had, the *Heathens*, to whom he revealed it not, could not have *been thus without excuſe*; but might very rationally have Expoſtulated the Caſe with their Great Judge, and Demurr'd to the Equity of the Sentence, had they been Condemned by Him. But, it appears from hence, that what was ſufficient to render

Men

Men *inexcuſable*, was not therefore ſufficient to *ſave* them.

It is not ſaid by the *Apoſtle*, nor can it be proved by any one elſe, that God vouchſafed to the *Heathens* the Means of Salvation, if ſo be the *Goſpel* be the only Means of it. And yet, I will not, I dare not affirm, that God will ſave none of thoſe, to whom the Sound of the Goſpel never reached: Though this is evident, that if he does ſave any of them, it muſt not be by that ordinary, ſtated, appointed Method, which the Scripture has revealed to us, and which they were wholly ignorant of. For grant, that the *Heathens* knew, that there was a God, who both made and governed the World, and who, upon that account, was to be worſhipped, and that with ſuch a Worſhip, as ſhould be ſutable to ſuch a *Being*; yet what Principle of meer Reaſon could aſſure them, that *this God would be a Rewarder of ſuch, as diligently ſought, and ſerved him?* For, certain it is, that there is nothing in the Nature of God to *oblige* him to reward any Service of his Creature;

ture; foraſmuch as, all that the Creature can doe, is but *Duty*; and even now, at this time, God has no other Obligation upon Him, but his own free Promiſe to reward the Piety and Obedience of his Servants, which promiſe Reaſon of it ſelf could never have found out, till God made it known by Revelation. And moreover, what Principle of Reaſon could aſſure a Man that God *would pardon* Sinners upon any terms whatſoever? Poſſibly it might know, *That God could doe ſo*; but this was no ſufficient Ground for Men to depend upon. And then, laſt of all, as for the way of his Pardoning Sinners, that he ſhould doe it upon a *ſatisfaction* paid to his *Juſtice*, by ſuch a Saviour, as ſhould be *both God and Man*; this was utterly impoſſible for all the Reaſon of Mankind to find out.

For, that theſe things could be read in the *Book of Nature*, or the Common Works of God's Providence, or be learned *by the Sun and Moon's preaching the Goſpel*, as ſome have fondly (not to ſay prophanely) enough aſſerted, it is infinitely

ſottiſh

ſottiſh to imagine, and can indeed be nothing elſe, but the *Turning the Grace of God into wanton*, and unreaſonable Propoſitions.

It is clear therefore, that the *Heathens* had no knowledge of *that way*, by which *alone* we expect Salvation. So that all the Hope, which we can have for them, is, That the *Goſpel* may not be the *utmoſt Limit* of the Divine Mercy; but that the Merits of Chriſt may overflow, and run over the Pale of the Church, ſo, as to reach *even* many of thoſe who lived and died invincibly ignorant of him.

But whether this ſhall be ſo, or no, God alone knows, who only is privy to the great Counſels of his own Will. It is a *Secret* hid from us; and therefore, though we may hope Compaſſionately, yet, I am ſure, we can pronounce nothing Certainly; It is enough for us, that God has aſſerted his *Juſtice*, even in his Dealing with thoſe, whom he treats not upon Terms of *Evangelical Mercy*. So that ſuch perſons can neither *excuſe themſelves*, nor yet *accuſe him*; who, in the ſevereſt

Sentence, that he can pronounce upon the Sinner, will (as the *Pſalmiſt* tells us) *be juſtified when he ſpeaks, and clear when he is judged.*

2*ly.* In the next place, we gather hence the unſpeakably wretched, and deplorable Condition of obſtinate Sinners under the Goſpel. The Sun of Mercy has ſhined too long, and too bright upon ſuch, to leave them any ſhadow of *Excuſe*. For, let them argue over all the Topicks of *Divine Goodneſs*, and *Human Weakneſs*, and whatſoever other pretences, poor, ſinking Sinners are apt to catch at, to ſupport and ſave themſelves by; yet, how Trifling muſt be their Plea! how Impertinent their Defence!

For, admit an Impenitent Heathen to plead, that albeit his Conſcience told him, that he had ſinned; yet, it could not tell him, that there was any proviſion of Mercy for him upon his Repentance. He knew not whether Amendment of Life would be accepted after the Law was once broke; or, that there was any *other Righteouſneſs* to Attone, or Merit for him, but his own. But

But no Chriſtian, who has been taken into the Arms of a better Covenant, and grown up in the knowledge of a Saviour, and the Doctrine of *Faith* and *Repentance* from Dead *Works*, can ſpeak ſo much as one plauſible word, for his Impenitence. And therefore, it was ſaid of him, who came to the *Marriage-feaſt without a Wedding-garment*, that, being charged, and apprehended for it, ἐφιμώθη, *he was Speechleſs*, ſtruck with *Shame*, and *Silence*, the proper Effects of an Over-powering Guilt, too manifeſt to be denied, and too groſs to be defended. His Reaſon deſerted, and his Voice failed him, finding himſelf Arraigned, Convicted, and Condemned in the Court of his own Conſcience.

So that if after all this, his great Judge had freely asked him, What he could alledge, or ſay for himſelf, why he ſhould not have Judgment to die Eternally, and Sentence to be Awarded according to the utmoſt Rigours of the Law, he could not, in this forlorn *Caſe*, have made uſe of the very laſt Plea of a Caſt *Criminal*; nor ſo much as have cried, *Mercy, Lord, Mercy.*

For, ſtill his Conſcience would have replied upon him, That Mercy had been offered, and abuſed; and, that the Time of Mercy was now paſt. And ſo, under this over-whelming Conviction, every Goſpel-ſinner muſt paſs to his Eternal Execution, taking the whole Load of his own Damnation ſolely, and entirely upon himſelf, and acquitting the moſt Juſt God, *who is Righteous in all his Works, and Holy in all his Ways.*

To whom (therefore) be rendred, and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.

Sacra-

Sacramental Preparation:

Set forth in a

SERMON

ON

MATTHEW XXII. 12.

PREACHED AT

Weſtminſter-Abbey,

On the 8th of *April*, 1688.

Being *Palm-Sunday.*

MATTHEW XXII. 12.

And he ſaith unto him, Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment?

THE whole Scheme of theſe Words is Figurative, as being a Parabolical Deſcription of God's vouchſafing to the World the Invaluable Bleſſing of the

Goſpel, by the Similitude of a *King*, with great Magnificence, Solemnizing *his Son's Marriage*, and with equal Bounty bidding, and inviting all about him to that Royal *Solemnity*; together with his ſevere Animadverſion, both upon thoſe, who would not come, and upon one, who did come in a very unbeſeeming manner.

For the better underſtanding of which Words, we muſt obſerve, that in all Parables, Two things are to be conſidered.

Firſt, The Scope and Deſign of the Parable; And,

Secondly, The Circumſtantial paſſages, ſerving only to compleat and make up the Narration.

Accordingly, in our Application of any Parable to the Thing deſigned, and ſet forth by it, we muſt not look for an abſolute and exact Correſpondence of all the Circumſtantial, or Subſervient paſſages of the Metaphorical part of it, with juſt ſo many of the ſame, or the like Paſſages in the Thing intended by it; but it is ſufficient, that there be a certain

Analogy,

Analogy, or Agreement between them, as to the principal Scope and Deſign of both.

As for the Deſign of this *Parable*, it is, no doubt, to ſet forth the free Offer of the Goſpel, with all its rich Privileges, to the *Jewiſh* Church and Nation, in the firſt place; and upon their Refuſal of it, and God's Rejection of them for that Refuſal, to declare the Calling of the *Gentiles* in their Room, by a free, unlimited Tender of the Goſpel to all Nations whatſoever; adding withall a very dreadfull, and ſevere Sentence upon thoſe, who being ſo freely invited, and ſo generouſly admitted, to ſuch high, and undeſerved Privileges, ſhould nevertheleſs abuſe, and deſpiſe them by an unworthy, wicked, and ungratefull Deportment under them.

For Men muſt not think that the Goſpel is all made up of *Privilege* and *Promiſe*, but that there is ſomething of Duty to be performed, as well as of Privilege to be enjoyed. No welcome to *a Wedding-ſupper, without a Wedding-garment*; and no

coming by a Wedding-garment for nothing. In all the Tranſactions between God, and the Souls of Men, ſomething is expected on both ſides; there being a fix'd, indiſſoluble, and (in the language of the Parable) a kind of *Marriage-Tye* between Duty, and Privilege, which renders them inſeparable.

Now, though I queſtion not, but that this Parable of the *Wedding-ſupper* comprehends in it the whole Complex of all the Bleſſings, and Privileges exhibited by the Goſpel; yet, I conceive, that there is one *Principal Privilege* amongſt all the reſt, that it ſeems more peculiarly to aim at, or at leaſt may more appoſitely, and emphatically be applied to, than to any other whatſoever. And that is the Bleſſed *Sacrament of the Euchariſt*, by which all the Benefits of the Goſpel are in an higher, fuller, and more Divine manner conveyed to the Faithfull, than by any other Duty or Privilege belonging to our Excellent Religion. And for this, I ſhall offer theſe Three following Reaſons.

1. Be-

1. Becauſe the Foundation of all Parables, is, (as we have ſhewn) ſome *Analogy* or *Similitude* between the Tropical, or Alluſive part of the Parable, and the Thing couched under it, and intended by it. *But* now, of all the Benefits, Privileges, or Ordinances of the Goſpel, which of them is there, that carries ſo natural a Reſemblance to a *Wedding-ſupper* as that, which every one of a very ordinary, diſcerning Faculty may obſerve *in the Sacrament of the Euchariſt?* For, ſurely, neither the Preaching of the Word, nor yet the Sacrament of Baptiſm, bears any ſuch *Reſemblance*, or Affinity to it. But, on the other ſide, this Sacrament of the Euchariſt ſo lively reſembles, and ſo happily falls in with it, that it is indeed it ſelf a *Supper*, and is called a *Supper*, and that by a genuine, proper, as well as a common, and received Appellation.

2. This Sacrament is not only with great Propriety of Speech called a *Supper*; but moreover, as it is the grand, and prime means of the neareſt, and moſt intimate Union, and Conjunction of the

Soul

Soul with Chriſt, it may, with a peculiar Significancy, be called alſo a *Wedding-ſupper*. And, as Chriſt frequently in Scripture, owns himſelf related to the Church, as *an Husband to a Spouſe*; So, if theſe Nuptial Endearments, by which Chriſt gives himſelf to the Soul, and the Soul mutually gives it ſelf to Chriſt, paſs between Chriſt and Believers in any Ordinance of the Goſpel, doubtleſs it is moſt eminently, and effectually in this. Which is another pregnant Inſtance of the Notable Reſemblance between this *Divine Sacrament*, and the *Wedding-ſupper* in the Parable; and, conſequently, a further Argument, of the Elegant, and Expreſſive Signification of one by the other.

3*ly*. and *Laſtly*, The very Manner of Celebrating this Sacrament, which is by the *Breaking of Bread*, was the way and manner of tranſacting Marriages in ſome of the *Eaſtern* Countries. Thus *Q. Curtius* reports, That when *Alexander* the Great Married the *Perſian Roxana*, the Ceremony they uſed, was no other, but this;

this; *Panem gladio diviſum uterque libabat*, he divided a piece of Bread with his Sword, of which each of them took a part, and ſo thereby the Nuptial Rites were performed. Beſides, that this Ceremony of *Feaſting* belongs moſt properly both to *Marriage*, and to the *Euchariſt*, as both of them have the Nature of a *Covenant*. And all Covenants were, in Old times, ſolemnized, and accompanied with Feſtival *Eating* and *Drinking*; the Perſons newly Confederate, always thereupon, Feaſting together in token of their full and perfect Accord, both as to Intereſt and Affection.

And now theſe three Conſiderations together, ſo exactly ſuting the Parable of the *Wedding-ſupper* to this Spiritual, Divine Banquet of the Goſpel, if it does not primarily, and in its firſt deſign, intend it; yet, certainly it may, with greater advantage of Reſemblance be applied to it, than to any other Duty or Privilege belonging to Chriſtianity.

Upon the Warrant of which, ſo very particular, and extraordinary a Cognation

tion between them, I ſhall, at preſent, treat of the Words wholly with reference to this Sacred, and Divine Solemnity, obſerving, and gathering from them, as they lie in Coherence with the foregoing, and following Parts of the Parable, theſe Two Propoſitions.

1. That to a worthy Participation of the Holy Myſteries, and great Privileges of the Goſpel; and particularly, that of the *Lord's-Supper*, there is indiſpenſably required a ſutable *Preparation*.

2. That God is a ſtrict Obſerver of, and a ſevere Animadverter upon, ſuch as preſume to partake of thoſe Myſteries, without ſuch a Preparation.

And firſt, for the firſt of theſe; *viz. That to a worthy Participation of the Holy Myſteries*, &c.

Now this Propoſition imports in it Two things:

1. That to a right diſcharge of this Duty, a *Preparation* is neceſſary.

2. That every *Preparation* is not ſufficient. And firſt, for the

Firſt

First of these: *That a Preparation is Necessary.* And this, I confess, is a Subject, which I am heartily sorry, that any Preacher should find it needfull to speak so much as *one* word upon. For, would any Man, in his Wits, venture to die without *Preparation*? And, if not, let me tell you, that nothing less than that, which *will* fit a Man for Death, can fit him for the Sacrament. The truth is, there is nothing great, or considerable in the World, which ought to be done, or *ventured upon*, without *Preparation*: But, above all, how dangerous, sottish, and irrational is it, to engage in any Thing, or Action *extempore*, where the Concern is *Eternity*?

None but the Careless, and the Confident (and few are Confident, but what are first Careless) would rush rudely into the Presence of a Great Man: And, shall we, in our Applications to the Great God, take that to be Religion, which the Common Reason of Mankind will not allow to be Manners? The very Rules of Worldly Civility might instruct Men

Men how to order their Addreſſes to God. For who, that is to appear before his *Prince*, or *Patron*, would not view, and re-view himſelf over and over, with all imaginable Care and Solicitude, that there be nothing juſtly offenſive in his Habit, Language, or Behaviour? But eſpecially, if he be vouchſafed the Honour of his Table, it would be infinitely more abſurd, and ſhamefull to appear foul and ſordid there; and in the Dreſs of the *Kitchin*, receive the Entertainments of the *Parlour*.

What previous Cleanſings, and Conſecrations, and what peculiar Veſtments were the Prieſts, under the Law, enjoyned to uſe, when they were to appear before God in the Sanctuary! And all this upon no leſs a penalty than Death. This, and this they were to doe, *leſt they died*, leſt God ſhould ſtrike them dead upon the ſpot: as we read in *Levit.* 8. 35. and in many other places in the Books of *Moſes*. And ſo exact were the *Jews* in their Preparations for the Solemn Times of God's Worſhip, that every Σάββατον had

had its προπαρασκευὴν or παρασκευὴν, that is, a part of the Sixth Day, from the Hour of Six in the *Evening*, to fit them for the Duties of the Seventh Day: Nor was this all; but they had alſo a προπαρασκευὴν, beginning *about Three in the Afternoon*, to prepare them for that: And indeed, the whole Day was, in a manner, but Preparative to the next; ſeveral Works being diſallow'd, and forborn amongſt them on that Day, which were not ſo upon any of the foregoing *Five*: So carefull, even to Scrupuloſity, were they to keep their *Sabbath* with due Reverence, and Devovotion; that they muſt not only have a Time to prepare them for that, but a further Time alſo, to parepare them for their very *Preparations*.

Nay, and the Heathens (many of them at leaſt) when they were to Sacrifice to their greateſt, and moſt Revered Deities, uſed, on the Evening before, to have a certain Preparative Rite or Ceremony, called by them *Cœna pura*; That is, a Supper, conſiſting of ſome peculiar Meats, in which they imagined a kind of

of Holineſs; and, by Eating of which, they thought themſelves Sanctified, and fitted to officiate about the Myſteries of the enſuing Feſtival. And what were all their *Luſtrations*, but ſo many Solemn Purifyings, to render both themſelves, and their Sacrifices, acceptable to their Gods?

So that we ſee here a Concurrence both of the *Jews* and *Heathens* in this Practice, before Chriſtianity ever appeared. Which, to me, is a kind of Demonſtration, That the Neceſſity of men's preparing themſelves for the Sacred Offices of Religion, was a Leſſon, which the meer Light and Dictates of Common Reaſon, without the help of Revelation, taught all the knowing and intelligent part of the World.

I will waſh my Hands in Innocency, (ſays *David*,) *and ſo will I compaſs thine Altar*, Pſal. 26. 6. And as the Apoſtle told the *Hebrews*, Heb. 13. 10. *We alſo*, We Chriſtians, *have an Altar* as well as they; an Altar as Sacred, an Altar to be approached with as much Awe and Reverence;

rence; and though there be no fire upon it, yet there is a dreadfull one that follows it. A fire, that does not indeed consume the Offering; but such an one, as will be sure to seize, and prey upon the unworthy Offerer. *I will be sanctified* (says *God*) *in them that come nigh me*, Levit. 10. 3. And God then accounts himself sanctified in such persons, when they sanctifie themselves. *Nadab* and *Abihu* were a dreadfull Exposition of this Text.

And for what concerns our selves; He that shall throughly consider, what the Heart of Man is, what Sin and the World is, and what it is to approve one's self to an All-searching Eye, in so sublime a Duty as the Sacrament, must acknowledge that a Man may as well go about it without a *Soul*, as without *Preparation*.

For the holyest Man living, by conversing with the World, insensibly draws something of Soil, and Taint from it: The very Air and Meen, the Way and Business of the World still (as it were)

rubbing ſomething upon the Soul, which muſt be fetched off again, before it can be able heartily to converſe with God. Many ſecret Indiſpoſitions, Coldneſſes and Averſions to Duty, will undiſcernibly ſteal upon it; and it will require both Time, and cloſe Application of Mind, to recover it to ſuch a Frame, as ſhall diſpoſe and fit it for the Spiritualities of Religion.

And ſuch as have made trial, find it neither ſo eaſie, nor ſo ready a paſſage from the Noiſe, the Din, and Hurry of Buſineſs, to the Retirements of Devotion, from the Exchange to the Cloſet, and from the Freedoms of Converſation, to the Recollections and Diſciplines of the Spirit.

The *Jews*, as ſoon as they came from Markets, or any other ſuch promiſcuous Reſorts, would be ſure to uſe accurate, and more than ordinary Waſhings. And had their Waſhings ſoak'd through the Body, into the Soul; and had not their Inſide, reproached their Outſide, I ſee nothing in this Cuſtom, but what was allowable

allowable enough, and (in a People which needed *Waſhing* ſo much) very commendable. Nevertheleſs, whatſoever it might have in it peculiar to the Genius of that Nation, the ſpiritual Uſe and Improvement of it, I am ſure, may very well reach the beſt of us. So, that if the *Jews* thought this Practice requiſite before they ſat down to their own Tables, let us Chriſtians think it abſolutely neceſſary, when we come to God's Table, *not to eat till we have waſhed.* And when I have ſaid ſo, I ſuppoſe I need not add, that our *Waſhing* is to be like our *Eating*, both of them Spiritual; that we are to carry it from the Hand, to the Heart, to improve a Ceremonial Nicety into a Subſtantial Duty, and the Modes of Civility, into the Realities of Religion.

And thus much for the Firſt Thing, *That a Preparation in General is Neceſſary.* But then, 2*ly*. The other Thing imported in the Propoſition; is, *That every Preparation is not ſufficient.* It muſt be a ſutable Preparation; none but a *Wedding-garment* will ſerve the turn; a Garment, as much

fitted to the Solemnity, as to the Body it ſelf, that wears it.

Now, all Fitneſs lies in a particular Commenſuration, or Proportion of one thing to another; and, that ſuch an one, as is founded in the very Nature of Things themſelves, and not in the Opinions of Men concerning them. And, for this Cauſe it is, that the Soul, no leſs than the Body, muſt have its ſeveral, diſtinct Poſtures, and Diſpoſitions, fitting it for ſeveral diſtinct Offices, and Performances. And, as no Man comes with folded Arms to fight or wreſtle, nor prepares himſelf for the Battle, as he would compoſe himſelf to Sleep; ſo, upon a true eſtimate of Things, it will be found every whit as abſurd and irrational, for a Man to diſcharge the moſt extraordinary Duty of his Religion, at the Rate of an ordinary Devotion. For, this is really a Paradox in Practice, and Men may ſometimes *doe*, as well as *ſpeak* Contradictions.

There is a great Feſtival now drawing on; a Feſtival, deſigned chiefly for the

Acts

Act of a joyfull Piety, but generally made only an occaſion of Bravery. I ſhall ſay no more of it at preſent, but this; That God expects from Men ſomething more than ordinary at ſuch times, and that it were much to be wiſhed, for the Credit of their Religion, as well as the Satisfaction of their Conſciences; that their *Eaſter* Devotions would, in ſome meaſure, come up to their *Eaſter* Dreſs.

Now, that our *Preparation* may anſwer the important Work and Duty which we are to engage in, theſe Two Conditions, or Qualifications, are required in it.

1. That it be *Habitual*.
2. That it be alſo *Actual*.

For, it is certain, that there may both be Acts, which proceed not from any pre-exiſting Habits; and, on the other ſide, Habits, which lie for a time dormant, and do not at all exert themſelves in Action. But, in the Caſe now before us, there muſt be a Conjunction of both; and, one without the other, can never be *effectual* for that purpoſe,

for which both together are but *ſufficient*. And,

Firſt, For *Habitual Preparation*. This conſiſts in a ſtanding, permanent Habit, or Principle of Holineſs, wrought chiefly by God's Spirit, and inſtrumentally by his Word, in the Heart, or Soul of Man: Such a Principle, as is called, both by our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, the *New Birth*, the *New Man*, the *Immortal Seed*, and the like; and, by which a Man is ſo univerſally changed, and transformed in the whole Frame and Temper of his Soul, as to have a new Judgment, and Sence of Things, new Deſires, new Appetites, and Inclinations.

And this is firſt produced in him, by that mighty, ſpiritual Change, which we call *Converſion*. Which, being ſo rarely and ſeldom found in the Hearts of Men, (even where it is moſt pretended to) is but too full, and ſad a Demonſtration of the Truth of that terrible Saying; *That few are choſen; and conſequently, but few ſaved*. For, who almoſt is there, of whom we can with any Rational *Aſſurance*, or perhaps

haps ſo much as *likelihood*, affirm, Here is a Man, whoſe Nature is renewed, whoſe Heart is changed, and the ſtream of whoſe Appetites is ſo turned, that he does with as high, and quick a reliſh, taſte the ways of Duty, Holineſs, and ſtrict Living, as others, or as he himſelf before this, graſped at the moſt enamouring Propoſals of Sin; Who almoſt (I ſay) is there, who can reach and verifie the height of this Character? and yet, without which, the Scripture abſolutely affirms, *That a Man cannot ſee the Kingdom of God*, John 3. 3. For, let Preachers ſay and ſuggeſt what they will, *Men will doe as they uſe to doe*; and, *Cuſtom* generally is too hard for *Conſcience*, in ſpight of all its Convictions. Poſſibly ſometimes in Hearing or Reading the Word, the Conſcience may be alarmed, the Affections warmed, good Deſires begin to kindle, and to form themſelves into ſome degrees of Reſolution; but the Heart remaining all the time unchanged; as ſoon as Men ſlide into the common Courſe, and Converſe of the World, all thoſe

Reſolutions, and Convictions, quickly cool, and languiſh, and after a few days are diſmiſſed as troubleſome Companions. But aſſuredly, no Man was ever made a true Convert, or a *new Creature*, at ſo eaſie a Rate; Sin was never diſpoſſeſſed, nor Holineſs introduced by ſuch feeble, vaniſhing Impreſſions. Nothing under a total, through Change will ſuffice; neither Tears, nor Trouble of Mind, neither good Deſires, nor Intentions, nor yet the Relinquiſhment of ſome Sins, nor the Performance of ſome Good Works will avail any thing, *but a new Creature*: A Word, that comprehends more in it, than Words can well expreſs; and, perhaps after all that can be ſaid of it, never throughly to be underſtood by what a Man *hears* from others, but by what he muſt *feel* within himſelf.

And now, that this is required as the Ground-work of all our Preparations for the Sacrament, is evident from hence; Becauſe this Sacrament is not firſt deſigned to *make* us Holy, but rather *ſuppoſes*

poſes us to be ſo; it is not a converting, but a *confirming* Ordinance. It is properly our *ſpiritual Food*: And, as all *Food* pre-ſuppoſes *a Principle of Life* in him who receives it, which Life is, by this means, to be continued and ſupported; So the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* is Originally intended to preſerve and maintain that *Spiritual Life*, which we doe or ſhould receive in Baptiſm, or at leaſt by a through Converſion after it. Upon which account, according to the true Nature and Intent of this Sacrament, Men ſhould not expect *Life*, but *Growth* from it: And ſee, that there be ſomething to be fed, before they ſeek out for proviſion. For, the Truth is, for any one who is not paſſed from *Death to Life*, and has not in him that *New living Principle*, which we have been hitherto ſpeaking of, to come to this Spiritual Repaſt, is, upon the matter, as abſurd and preposterous, as if he who makes a Feaſt, ſhould ſend to the Graves and the Churchyards for Gueſts, or entertain and treat a Corps at a Banquet.

Let

Let Men therefore conſider, before they come hither, whether they have any thing beſides *the Name* they received in Baptiſm, to prove their Chriſtianity by. Let them conſider, whether, as by their Baptiſm, they formerly waſhed away their Original Guilt, ſo they have not ſince, by their Actual Sins, waſhed away their Baptiſm. And, if ſo, Whether the *converting Grace* of God has ſet them upon their Legs again, by forming in them a *New Nature*. And, that ſuch an one, as exerts and ſhews it ſelf by the ſure, infallible Effects of a Good life: Such an one, as enables them to reject and trample upon all the alluring Offers of the *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil*, ſo as not to be conquered, or enſlaved by them; and, to chuſe the hard and rugged Paths of Duty, rather than the eaſie and voluptuous Ways of Sin: which every Chriſtian, by the very Nature of his Religion, as well as by his Baptiſmal Vow, is ſtrictly obliged to doe: And, if upon an impartial ſurvey of themſelves, Men find that no ſuch Change has paſſed upon them,

them, either let them prove, that they may be Chriſtians upon eaſier terms, or have a care how they intrude upon ſo great, and holy an Ordinance, in which God is ſo ſeldom *mocked*, but it is to the Mocker's confuſion. And thus much for *Habitual Preparation*. But,

2*ly*. Over and above this, there is required alſo an *Actual Preparation*; which is (as it were) the furbiſhing or rubbing up of the former Habitual Principle.

We have both of them excellently deſcribed in *Matth*. 25 in the Parable of the *Ten Virgins*; of which, the *Five Wiſe* are ſaid to have had *Oil in their Lamps*; yet, notwithſtanding that, *Mid-night* and Wearineſs was too hard for them, and they all ſlumber'd and ſlept, and their Lamps caſt but a dim, and a feeble Light till the *Bridegrooms's approach*; but then, upon the firſt Alarm of that, they quickly *roſe*, *and trimmed their Lamps*, and without either *trimming* or *painting* themſelves (being as much *too Wiſe*, as ſome ſhould be *too Old* for ſuch Follies) they preſently put themſelves into a readineſs,

dineſs, to receive their ſurprizing Gueſt. Where, by their *having Oil in their Lamps*, no doubt, muſt be underſtood a Principle of Grace infuſed into their Hearts, or the new Nature formed within them; and, by their *Trimming their Lamps*, muſt be meant their Actual Exerciſe, and Improvement of that ſtanding Principle, in the particular Inſtances of Duty, ſutable, and appropriate to the grand Solemnity of the Bridegroom's Reception. In like manner, when a Man comes to this Sacrament, it is not enough that he has an Habitual ſtock of Grace, that he has the *Immortal Seed* of a Living Faith ſown in his Heart. This indeed is neceſſary, but not ſufficient; his Faith muſt be, not only *living*, but *lively* too; it muſt be brightned and ſtirr'd up, and (as it were) put into a poſture by a particular Exerciſe of thoſe ſeveral Vertues, that are ſpecifically requiſite to a due performance of this Duty: *Habitual Grace* is the Life, and *Actual Grace* the Beauty and Ornament of the Soul; And therefore, let People in this high and great Concern be

but

but ſo juſt to their Souls, as, in one much leſs, they never fail to be to their Bodies; in which the greateſt Advantages of Natural Beauty make none think the further advantage of a Decent *Dreſs* ſuperfluous.

Nor is it at all ſtrange, if we look into the Reaſon of Things, That a Man habitually Good and Pious, ſhould, at ſome certain Turns, and Times of his Life, be at a loſs, how to exert the higheſt Acts of that Habitual Principle. For, no Creature *is perfect and pure Act*; eſpecially a Creature ſo compounded of Soul and Body, that Body ſeems much the ſtronger part in the compoſition.

Common Experience ſhews that the wiſeſt of Men are not always fit and diſpoſed to act wiſely, nor the moſt admired Speakers to ſpeak eloquently, and exactly. They have indeed an acquired, ſtanding Ability of Wiſdom and Eloquence within them, which gives them an Habitual Sufficiency for ſuch Performances. But, for all that, if the deepeſt States-man ſhould preſume to go to

Council

Council immediately from his Cups, or the *ableſt Preacher* think himſelf fitted to Preach, only by ſtepping up to the Pulpit; notwithſtanding the Policy of one, and the Eloquence of the other, they may chance to get the juſt character of *bold Fools* for venturing, whatſoever *good fortune* may bring them off.

And therefore, the moſt Active Powers and Faculties of the Mind require ſomething beſides themſelves to raiſe them to the full height of their Natural Activity: Something to excite, and quicken, and draw them forth into immediate Action. And this holds proportionably in all things Animate, or Inanimate, in the World. The bare Nature, and eſſential Form of Fire, will enable it to burn; but there muſt be an enlivening Breath of Air beſides, to make it flame. A Man has the ſame ſtrength, ſleeping and waking; but while he ſleeps, it fits him no more for buſineſs, than if he had done. Nor is it the having of Wheels, and Springs, though never ſo curiouſly wrought, and artificially ſet,

but

but the winding of them up, that muſt give Motion to the Watch. And it would be endleſs to Illuſtrate this Subject by all the various Inſtances that Art and Nature could ſupply us with.

But the caſe is much the ſame in Spirituals: For, Grace in the Soul, while the Soul is in the Body, will always have the ill Neighbourhood of ſome Remainders of Corruption; which, though they do not conquer, and extinguiſh, yet will be ſure to ſlacken, and allay the vigour and briskneſs of the Renewed Principle; ſo that when this Principle is to engage in any great Duty, it will need the actual Intention, the particular Streſs and Application of the whole Soul, to diſencumber, and ſet it free, to ſcour off its Ruſt, and remove thoſe Hindrances, which would otherwiſe clog and check the Freedom of its Operations.

And thus having ſhewn, that to fit us for a due Acceſs to the Holy Sacrament, we muſt add *Actual* Preparation to *Habitual*, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew the ſeveral Parts or Ingredients, of which this

this Actual Preparation muſt conſiſt.

And here I ſhall not *pretend* to give an Account of every particular Duty that may be uſefull for this purpoſe, but ſhall only mention ſome of the Principal, and ſuch as may moſt peculiarly contribute towards it: As,

Firſt, Let a Man apply himſelf to the great and difficult Work of *Self-examination* by a ſtrict Scrutiny into, and Survey of the whole Eſtate of his Soul; according to that known and excellent Rule of the Apoſtle, in the very Caſe now before us; 1 *Cor.* 11. 28. *Let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread*, &c. If a man would have ſuch a *Wedding-garment* as may fit him exactly, let Self-examination take the *Meaſure*. A Duty of ſo mighty an Influence upon all that concerns the Soul, that it is indeed the very Root, and Ground-work of all true Repentance, and the Neceſſary *Antecedent*, if not alſo the direct *Cauſe* of a Sinner's Return to God.

For, as there are ſome Sins which require a particular, and diſtinct Repentance

tance by themſelves, and cannot be accounted for in the general Heap of Sins *known* and *unknown*; ſo, how is it poſſible for a Man to repent rightly of ſuch Sins, unleſs, by a through Search into the Nature, Number, and Diſtinguiſhing Circumſtances of them, he comes to ſee how, and in what Degree they *are* to be repented of?

But the Soveraign Excellency and Neceſſity of this Duty, needs no other nor greater Proof of it, than this one Conſideration, That nothing in Nature can be more grievous, and offenſive to a Sinner, than to look into himſelf; and generally what Grace requires, Nature is moſt averſe to. It is indeed as offenſive as to rake into a Dunghil; as grievous, as for one to read over his Debts, when he is not able to pay them; or for a Bankrupt to examine, and look into his Accounts, which at the ſame time that they *acquaint*, muſt needs alſo *upbraid* him with his Condition.

But as irkſome as the Work is, it is abſolutely Neceſſary. Nothing can well

be imagined more painfull, than to probe and ſearch a purulent old Sore to the Bottom, but for all that, the Pain muſt be endured, or no Cure expected. And Men certainly have ſunk their Reaſon to very groſs, low, and abſurd Conceptions of God, when in the Matter of Sin they can make ſuch falſe, and ſhort Reckonings with him, and their own Hearts; for can they imagine, that God has therefore forgot their Sins, becauſe they are not willing to remember them? or will they meaſure his *Pardon* by their own *Oblivion*? What pitiful Fig-leaves, what ſenſeleſs and ridiculous Shifts are theſe, not able to *ſilence*, and much leſs *ſatisfie* an accuſing Conſcience?

But now for the better Management of this Examination of our Paſt-lives, we muſt throughly canvaſs them with theſe and the like Queſtions.

As for inſtance; Let a Man enquire what Sins he has committed, and what Breaches he has made upon thoſe two great ſtanding Rules of Duty, the *Decalogue*, and our *Saviour*'s Divine Sermon upon

upon the Mount. Let him enquire alſo what particular Aggravations ly upon his Sins; as whether they have not been committed againſt ſtrong Reluctancy, and Light of Conſcience? after many winning Calls of Mercy to reclaim, and many terrible Warnings of Judgment to affright him? Whether Reſolutions, Vows, and Proteſtations have not been made againſt them? Whether they have not been repeated frequently, and perſiſted in obſtinately? And laſtly, whether the ſame Appetites to Sin have not remained as active, and unmortified after Sacraments, as ever they had been before?

How important theſe Conſiderations, and Heads of Enquiry are, all who underſtand any Thing, will eaſily perceive. For this we muſt know, That the very ſame Sin, as to the Nature of it, ſtamp'd with any one of theſe Aggravations, is, in effect, not the ſame. And, he who has ſinned the ſame great Sin after ſeveral times receiving the Sacrament, muſt not think that God will accept him under ten

times greater Repentance, and Contrition for it, than he brought with him to that Duty formerly; Whether God by his Grace will enable him to riſe up to ſuch a Pitch, or no, is uncertain; but moſt certain, that both his Work is harder, and his Danger greater than it was, or could be at the firſt.

Secondly, When a Man has by ſuch a cloſe and rigorous Examination of himſelf, found out the *accurſed Thing*, and diſcovered his *Sin*; the next Thing in order muſt be, to work up his Heart to the utmoſt Hatred of it, and the bittereſt Sorrow and Remorſe for it. For, *Self-examination* having firſt preſented it to the Thoughts, theſe naturally tranſmit, and hand it over to the Paſſions. And this introduces the next Ingredient of our Sacramental Preparations, to wit, *Repentance*. Which arduous Work I will ſuppoſe not now to *begin*, but to be *renewed*; and that with ſpecial Reference to Sins not repented of before, and yet more eſpecially to thoſe new Scores which we ſtill have run our ſelves upon, ſince the laſt

laſt preceding Sacrament. Which Method, faithfully and conſtantly obſerved, muſt needs have an admirable and mighty Effect upon the Conſcience, and keep a Man from breaking, or running behind-hand in his Spiritual Eſtate, which, without frequent Accountings, he will hardly be able to prevent.

But becauſe this is a Duty of ſuch high Conſequence, I would by all means warn Men of one very common, and yet very dangerous Miſtake about it; and that is, the taking of meer *Sorrow for Sin*, for *Repentance*. It is indeed a good Introduction to it; but the Porch, though never ſo fair and ſpacious, is not the Houſe it ſelf. Nothing paſſes in the Accounts of God for Repentance, but Change of Life: *Ceaſing to doe Evil, and doing Good*, are the Two great Integral Parts that complete this Duty. *For not to doe Evil*, is much better than the ſharpeſt Sorrow *for having done it*; *and to doe Good*, is better, and more valuable than both.

When a Man has found out *Sin* in his Actions, let him reſolutely Arreſt it there; but let him alſo purſue it home to his Inclinations, and diſlodge it thence, otherwiſe it will be all to little purpoſe; for the Root being ſtill left behind, it is odds but in time it will ſhoot out again.

Men befool themſelves infinitely, when by venting a few Sighs, or Groans, putting the Finger in the Eye, and whimpering out a few melancholy Words; and laſtly, concluding all, with, *I wiſh I had never done ſo; and I am reſolved never to doe ſo more*; they will needs perſwade themſelves, that they have repented; though, perhaps, in this very thing, their Heart all the while deceives them, and they neither really *wiſh* the one, nor *reſolve* the other.

But whether they doe, or no, all true, penitential Sorrow will, and muſt proceed much further. It muſt force, and make its way into the very inmoſt Corners, and Receſſes of the Soul; it muſt ſhake all the Powers of Sin, producing in the Heart ſtrong, and laſting Averſi-

ons

ons to Evil, and equal Diſpoſitions to Good, which, I muſt confeſs, are great Things; But if the Sorrow which we have been ſpeaking of, carry us not ſo far, let it expreſs it ſelf never ſo loudly, and paſſionately, and diſcharge it ſelf in never ſo many Shours of Tears, and Vollies of Sighs; yet, by all this, it will no more purge a man's Heart, than the waſhing of his Hands can cleanſe the rottenneſs of his Bones. But,

Thirdly, When *Self-examination* has both ſhewn us our Sin, and *Repentance* has diſowned and caſt it out, the next Thing naturally conſequent upon this, is with the higheſt Importunity to ſupplicate God's *Pardon* for the Guilt, and his *Grace* againſt the Power of it: And this brings in *Prayer* as the Third Preparative for the Sacrament. A Duty, upon which all the Bleſſings of both Worlds are entailed. A Duty, appointed by God himſelf, as the great Conduit, and noble Inſtrument of Commerce between Heaven and Earth. A Duty, founded on Man's Eſſential dependance upon God,

and ſo, in the Ground and Reaſon of it, perpetual, and conſequently, in the Practice of it, indiſpenſable.

But I ſhall ſpeak of it now only with reference to the Sacrament. And ſo, whatſoever other Graces may furniſh us with a *Wedding-garment*, it is certain that *Prayer* muſt put it on. *Prayer* is that, by which a Man engages all the Auxiliaries of Omnipotence it ſelf againſt his Sin; and is ſo utterly contrary to, and inconſiſtent with it, that the ſame Heart cannot long hold them both, but one muſt ſoon quit poſſeſſion of it to the other; and, either Praying make a Man leave off Sinning, or Sinning force him to give over Praying.

Every real Act of Hatred of Sin, is, in the very Nature of the Thing, a partial Mortification of it; and, it is hardly poſſible for a Man to pray heartily againſt his Sin, but he muſt at the ſame time, hate it too. I know a Man may think that he hates his Sin, when indeed he does not; but then it is alſo as true, that he does not ſincerely pray

againſt it, whatſoever he may imagine.

Beſides, ſince the very Life and Spirit of *Prayer* conſiſts in an ardent, vehement Deſire of the Thing prayed for; and, ſince the Nature of the Soul is ſuch, that it ſtrangely ſymbolizes with the Thing it mightily deſires; it is evident, That if a Man would have a devout, humble, Sin-abhorring, Self-denying Frame of Spirit, he cannot take a more efficacious courſe to attain it, than by Praying himſelf into it. And ſo cloſe a Connexion has this Duty with the Sacrament, that whatſoever we receive in the Sacrament, is properly in anſwer to our Prayers. And conſequently, we may with great aſſurance conclude, That he who is not frequently *upon his Knees*, before he comes to that holy Table, *kneels* to very little purpoſe when he is there. But then,

Fourthly, Becauſe *Prayer* is not only one of the higheſt, and hardeſt Duties in it ſelf, but ought to be more than ordinarily fervent and vigorous before the Sacrament: Let the *Body* be alſo called in,

in, as an Aſſiſtant to the *Soul*, and *Abſtinence* and *Faſting* added to promote and highten her Devotions. *Prayer* is a kind of *Wreſtling with God*; and, he who would win the Prize at that Exerciſe, muſt be ſeverely *dieted* for that purpoſe.

The truth is, *Faſting* was ever acknowledged by the Church, in all Ages, as a ſingular Inſtrument of Religion, and a particular Preparative to the Sacrament. And hardly was there ever any thing Great, or Heroick, either done or attempted in Religion, without it. Thus, when *Moſes received the Law from God, it was with Faſting*, Deut. 9. 9. When *Chriſt* entred upon the great Office of his Mediatorſhip, it was with *Faſting*, *Matth.* 4. 2. And when *Paul* and *Barnabas* were ſeparated to that high and difficult Charge of Preaching to the *Gentiles*, *Acts* 13. 2. ſtill it was managed with *Faſting*. And, we know, the Rubrick of our own Church always, almoſt, enjoyns a *Faſt* to prepare us for a *Feſtival*.

Bodily Abſtinence is certainly a great help to the *Spirit*, and the Experience of all

all wiſe and good Men has ever found it ſo. The Ways of Nature, and the Methods of Grace, are vaſtly different. Good Men themſelves are never ſo ſurprized, as in the midſt of their Jollities; nor ſo fatally over-taken, and caught, as when their *Table is made the Snare.* Even our firſt Parents *ate* themſelves out of Paradiſe; and *Job*'s *Children* junketted and feaſted together often, but the Reckoning coſt them dear at laſt. The *Heart of the Wiſe* (ſays *Solomon*) *is in the Houſe of Mourning*, and the Houſe of *Faſting* adjoyns to it.

In a word, *Faſting* is the Diet of Angels, the Food and Refection of Souls, and the richeſt, and higheſt Aliment of Grace. And, he who Faſts for the ſake of Religion, *Hungers and Thirſts after Righteouſneſs* without a Metaphor.

Fifthly, Since every Devout Prayer is deſigned to aſcend, and *fly up* to Heaven; as *Faſting* (according to St *Auſtin's* Alluſion) has given it *one Wing*, ſo let *Almsgiving* to the Poor ſupply it with another. And both theſe together, will not only

carry

carry it up Triumphant to Heaven, but, if need require, bring Heaven it ſelf down to the Devout Perſon who ſends it thither; As, while *Cornelius* was *Faſting* and *Praying*, (to which he ſtill joyned *giving Alms*,) an Angel from Heaven was diſpatched to him with this happy Meſſage, *Acts* 10. 4. *Thy Prayers, and thine Alms, are come up for a Memorial before God.* And nothing, certainly, can give a greater Efficacy to *Prayer*, and a more peculiar Fitneſs for the *Sacrament*, than an Hearty, and Conſcientious Practice of this Duty; without which all that has been mentioned hitherto is nothing but Wind and Air, Pageantry, and Hypocriſie: For, if there be any truer Meaſure of a Man, than *by what he does*; it it muſt be, *by what he gives*. He, who is truly Pious, will account it a *Wedding-ſupper* to Feed the Hungry, and a *Wedding-garment* to Cloath the Naked. And, God and Man will find it a very unfit *Garment* for ſuch a purpoſe, which has not in it a *Purſe*, or *Pocket* for the Poor.

But,

But, ſo far are ſome from *conſidering the Poor* before the Sacrament, that they have been obſerved to give nothing to the Poor, even at the Sacrament: And thoſe ſuch, that if Rich Cloaths might paſs for a *Wedding-garment*, none could appear better fitted for ſuch a Solemnity than themſelves; yet ſome ſuch, I ſay, I my ſelf have ſeen at a Communion, drop nothing into the Poor's Baſon.

But, good God! What is the Heart of ſuch Worldlings made of, and what a Mind do they bring with them to ſo Holy an Ordinance! An Ordinance, in which none can be qualified *to receive*, whoſe Heart does not ſerve them alſo *to give*.

From ſuch indeed as have nothing, God expects nothing; but, where God has given (as I may ſay) with both Hands, and Men return with None, ſuch muſt know, that the Poor have an *Action of Debt* againſt them, and that God Himſelf will undertake, and proſecute their Suit for them; and if he does, ſince they could not find in their Hearts to proportion *their Charity to their Eſtates*; nothing

nothing can be more juſt, than for God to proportion *their Eſtates to their Charity*; and, by ſo doing, he cannot well give them a ſhrewder, and a ſhorter Cut.

In the mean time, let ſuch know further, That whoſoever dares, upon ſo Sacred, and Solemn an Occaſion, approach the Altar, with Bowels ſo ſhut up, as to leave nothing behind him there for the Poor, ſhall be ſure to carry *ſomething* away with him from thence, *which will doe* him but little good.

Sixthly, Since the *Charity* of the *Hand* ſignifies but little, unleſs it ſprings from the *Heart*, and flows through the *Mouth*, let the Pious Communicant, both in *Heart* and *Tongue*, *Thoughts* and *Speech*, put on a Charitable, Friendly, Chriſtian Temper of Mind, and Carriage towards all. *Wrath and Envy*, *Malice and Backbiting*, and the like, are direct Contradictions to the very Spirit of Chriſtianity, and fit a Man for the Sacrament, juſt as much as a Stomach over-flowed with Gall would help him to digeſt his

Meat.

Meat. St. *Paul* often Rebukes and Schools ſuch Diſturbers of the World very ſharply, correcting a baſe Humour by a very generous Rule, *Phil.* 2. 3. *Let each* (ſays he) *eſteem others better than themſelves.* No Man, doubtleſs, ſhall ever be *Condemned* of God for *not Judging* his Brother: For, be thy Brother or Neighbour never ſo wicked and ungodly, ſatisfie thy ſelf with this, That another's Wickedneſs ſhall never Damn thee; but thy own Bitterneſs, and Rancour may; and, continued in, certainly will: Rather let his want of Grace give thee occaſion to exercile Thine, (if thou haſt any,) in Thinking and Speaking better of him, than he deſerves: And, if thy *Charity* proves *miſtaken*, aſſure thy ſelf, that God will accept the *Charity*, and over-look the *Miſtake*. But if in Judging him whom thou haſt nothing to doe with, thou chanceſt to Judge one way, and God and Truth to Judge another, take heed of that Dreadfull Tribunal, where it will not be enough to ſay, That *I thought this*, or *I heard that*; and, where

no

no Man's miſtake will be able to warrant an unjuſt Surmiſe, and much leſs juſtifie a falſe Cenſure. Such would find it much better for them to retreat inwards, and view themſelves in the Law of God and their own Conſciences; and, that will tell them *their own* impartially, that will fetch off all their *paint*, and ſhew them a *foul Face* in a *true Glaſs*. Let them read over their Catechiſm, and lay aſide *Spight* and *Virulence*, *Goſſipping* and *Medling*, *Calumny* and *Detraction*; and let not all about them be Villains and Reprobates, becauſe they themſelves are Envious and Forlorn, Idle and Malicious: Such Vermin are to be lookt upon by all ſober Chriſtians, as the very Cankers of Society, and the Shame of any Religion; and ſo far from being fit to come to the Sacrament, that really they are not fit to come to Church; and would much better become the *Houſe of Correction*, than the *Houſe of Prayer*.

Nevertheleſs, as Cuſtom in Sin makes People *blind*, and Blindneſs makes them *bold*, none come more confidently to the Sacrament

Sacrament than ſuch Wretches. But when I conſider the pure and bleſſed Body of our Saviour, paſſing through the *open Sepulchres of ſuch Throats*, into the noiſome Receptacles of their boiling, fermenting Breaſts, it ſeems to me a lively, but ſad Repreſentation of Chriſt's being *firſt buried, and then deſcending into Hell.* Let this Diabolical Leaven therefore be purged out; and, while ſuch pretend to be ſo buſie in cleanſing their *Hearts*, let them not forget to waſh their *Mouths* too.

Seventhly and *Laſtly*: As it is to be ſuppoſed, that the Pious Communicant has all along carried on, ſo let him likewiſe, in the Iſſue, cloſe his Preparatory Work with Reading and Meditation. Of which, ſince the Time will not ſerve me to ſpeak more now, I ſhall only remark this, That they are Duties of ſo near an Import to the Well-being of the Soul, that the proper Office of Reading is, to *take* in its Spiritual food, and of Meditation, to *digeſt* it.

And now, I hope, that whoſoever ſhall in the Sincerity of his Heart acquit himſelf as to all the foregoing Duties, and thereby prepare and adorn himſelf to meet and converſe with his Saviour at this Divine Feaſt, ſhall never be accoſted with the Thunder of that dreadfull Increpation from him, *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having a Wedding-garment?*

But, becauſe I am very ſenſible, that all the particular Inſtances of Duty, which may one way or other contribute to the fitting of Men for this *Great one*, can hardly be aſſigned, and much leſs equally and univerſally applied, where the Conditions of Men are ſo very different, I ſhall gather them all into this one plain, full, and comprehenſive Rule; namely, *That* all thoſe Duties which Common Chriſtianity always obliges a Chriſtian to, ought moſt eminently, and with an higher and more exalted pitch of Devotion, to be performed by him before the Sacrament; and convertibly, whatſoever Duties Divines preſcribe to be obſerved by

by him with a peculiar Fervour, and Application of Mind upon this occaſion, ought in their proportion, to be practiſed by him, through the whole Courſe of his Chriſtian Converſation.

And this is a *ſolid and ſure Rule*. A Rule, that will never deceive or lurch the ſincere Communicant. A Rule, that by adding *Diſcretion* to *Devotion*, will both keep him from being humourſome, ſingular, and phantaſtick in his Preparations before the Sacrament, and (which is worſe, and muſt fatally unravel all again) from being (as moſt are) looſe and remiſs after it; and thinking, that as ſoon as the Sacrament is over, their great Buſineſs is done, whereas indeed it is but begun.

And now I fear, that, as I have been too long upon the whole, ſo I have been but too brief upon ſo many, and thoſe ſuch weighty Particulars. But I hope you will ſupply this Defect, by enlarging upon them in your Practice: And make up the Omiſſions of the Pulpit, by the Meditations of the Cloſet. And

God direct and assist us all in so concerning a Work.

To whom be rendred, and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.

The

The Fatal Impoſture,
AND
Force of WORDS:

Set forth in a

SERMON

PREACHED

On *ISAIAH* V. 20.

MAY the 9th. 1686.

ISA. V. 20.

Wo unto them that call Evil good, and Good evil, &c.

THeſe Words contain in them Two things:

1. A *Wo* denounced; and,

2. The *Sin* for which it is denounced; to wit, *the calling Evil good, and Good evil.* Which Expreſſion may be taken Two ways:

First, In a *Judicial*, and more reſtrained Senſe: As it ſignifies the Pronouncing of a *Guilty* Perſon *Innocent*, and an *Innocent Guilty*, in the Courſe of Judgment. But this I take to be too Particular, to reach the Deſign of the Words here.

Secondly, It may be taken in a *General*, and more enlarged Senſe; as it imports a Miſ-repreſentation of the Qualities of Things, and Actions, to the common Apprehenſions of Men, abuſing their Minds with falſe Notions; and ſo by this Artifice making *Evil* paſs for *Good*, and *Good* for *Evil*, in all the great Concerns of Life. Where, by *Good*, I Queſtion not, but *Good* Morally ſo called, *Bonum Honeſtum* ought (chiefly at leaſt) to be underſtood; and, that the Good of *Profit*, or *Pleaſure*, the *Bonum Utile*, or *Jucundum*, hardly come into any Account here, as things extremely below the principal deſign of the Spirit of God in this place.

It is wonderful to conſider, that, ſince *Good* is the natural and proper Object, which all humane Choice is carried out to;

and

and *Evil*, that, which with all its Might it ſhuns, and flies from; And, ſince withall, there is that Controlling Worth and Beauty in Goodneſs, that, as ſuch, the *Will* cannot but like, and deſire it; and, on the other ſide, that odious Deformity in Vice, that it never ſo much as offers it ſelf to the Affections, or Practice of Mankind, but under the Diſguiſe and Colours of the other; And, ſince all this is eaſily diſcernible by the ordinary Diſcourſes of the Underſtanding; and laſtly, ſince nothing paſſes into the Choice of the Will, but as it comes conveyed, and warranted by the Underſtanding, as worthy of its choice; I ſay, it is wonderfull to conſider, that notwithſtanding all this, the Lives and Practices of the generality of Men, (in which Men certainly ſhould be moſt in earneſt) are almoſt wholly took up in a paſſionate Purſuit of what is *Evil*, and in an equal Neglect, if not alſo an Abhorrence, of what is *Good*. This is certainly ſo; and Experience, which is neither to be confuted, nor denied, does every minute

prove the ſad Truth of this Aſſertion.

But now, what ſhould be the Cauſe of all this? For, ſo great, ſo conſtant, and ſo general a Practice muſt needs have, not only a Cauſe, but alſo a great, a conſtant, and a *general Cauſe*; a *Cauſe* every way Commenſurate to ſuch an *Effect*: And *this Cauſe* muſt of neceſſity be from one of thoſe Two Commanding Powers of the Soul, the *Underſtanding*, or the *Will*. As for the *Will*; though its Liberty be ſuch, that a ſutable, or proper *Good* being propoſed to it, it has a Power to refuſe, or not to chuſe it; yet it has no Power to chuſe *Evil*, conſidered abſolutely as *Evil*; this being directly againſt the Nature, and Natural Method of its Workings.

Nevertheleſs, it is but too manifeſt that things *Evil*, extremely *Evil*, are both readily choſen, and eagerly purſued and practiſed by it. And therefore, this muſt needs be from that other governing Faculty of the Soul, the *Underſtanding*, which repreſents to the *Will* things really *Evil*, under the Notion and Cha-

racter

racter of *Good*. And this, this is the true Source and Original of this great Miſchief. The *Will* chuſes, follows and embraces, things Evil, and deſtructive; but it is, becauſe the *Underſtanding* firſt tells it, that they are *good, and wholeſome, and fit to be choſen* by it. One Man gives another a Cup of Poyſon, a thing as terrible as Death; but, at the ſame time, he tells him, that it is a Cordial; and ſo he drinks it off, and dies.

From the beginning of the World, to this day, there was never any great Villainy acted by Men, but it was in the ſtrength of ſome great Fallacy put upon their Minds by a falſe repreſentation of *Evil* for *Good*, or *Good* for *Evil*. *In the day, that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die*, ſays God to *Adam*; and ſo long as *Adam* believed this, he did not eat. But, ſays the Devil, In the Day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt be ſo far from *ſurely dying*, that thou ſhalt be Immortal, and from a Man, grow into an Angel; and upon this different account of the thing, he preſently took the Fruit, and

ate

ate Morality, Miſery, and Deſtruction to himſelf, and his whole Poſterity.

And now, can there be a *Wo* or *Curſe* in all the Stores and Magazines of Vengeance, equal to the Malignity of ſuch a Practice; of which one ſingle Inſtance could involve all Mankind, paſt, preſent, and to come, in one univerſal, and irreparable confuſion? God commanded, and *told Man what was Good*, but the Devil ſur-named it *Evil*, and thereby baffled the Command, turned the World topſy-turvy, and brought a new Chaos upon the whole Creation.

But that I may give you a more full Diſcuſſion of the ſenſe and deſign of the Words, I ſhall doe it under theſe following Particulars: As,

Firſt, I ſhall give you ſome general Account of the Nature of *Good* and *Evil*, and the Reaſon upon which they are founded.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew that the *Way* by which *Good* and *Evil* commonly operate upon the Mind of Man, is by thoſe reſpective *Names* or *Appellations* by which they

they are notified, and conveyed to the Mind. And,

Thirdly and *Laſtly*, I ſhall ſhew the *Miſchief*, directly, naturally, and unavoidably following from the Miſapplication, and Confuſion of thoſe Names.

And, I hope, by going over all theſe Particulars, you may receive ſome tolerable ſatisfaction about this great Subject, which we have now before us.

1. And firſt for the *Nature of Good and Evil*, what they are, and upon what they are founded. The Knowledge of this I look upon as the Foundation and Ground-work of all thoſe Rules, that either Moral Philoſophy, or Divinity, can give for the Direction of the Lives and Practices of Men; and conſequently, ought to be reckoned as a firſt Principle; and, that ſuch an one, that, for ought I ſee, the through *Speculation* of Good, will be found much more difficult than the *Practice*. But when we ſhall have once given ſome Account of the Nature of *Good*, that of *Evil* will be known by Conſequence; as being only a Privation,

vation, or Abſence of *Good*, in a Subject capable of it, and proper for it.

Now, *Good* in the general Nature, and Notion of it, over and above the bare *Being* of a Thing, Connotes alſo a certain *ſuitableneſs or agreeableneſs of it to ſome other thing*: According to which *general Notion* of Good applied to the *particular Nature* of Moral Goodneſs, (upon which only we now inſiſt,) a Thing or Action is ſaid to be *Morally Good* or *Evil*, as it is agreeable, or diſagreeable to *Right Reaſon*, or to a Rational Nature: And, as *Right Reaſon* is nothing elſe but the Underſtanding, or Mind of Man, diſcourſing, and judging of Things truly, and as they are in themſelves; and (as all *Truth* is unchangeably the ſame; that Propoſition, which is true at any time, being ſo for ever) ſo it muſt follow, That the *Moral Goodneſs or Evil of men's Actions*, which conſiſt in their Conformity, or Unconformity to *Right Reaſon*, muſt be alſo Eternal, Neceſſary, and Unchangeable. So that, as that, which is *Right Reaſon* at any Time, or in any Caſe, is always

Right

Right Reaſon with relation to the ſame Time, and Caſe; In like manner, that which is Morally *Good*, or *Evil*, at any Time, or in any Caſe, (ſince it takes its whole meaſure from *Right Reaſon*) muſt be alſo Eternally, and Unchangeably, a *Moral Good*, or *Evil*; with relation to that Time, and to that Caſe. For Propoſitions concerning the *Goodneſs*, as well as concerning the *Truth* of Things, are *neceſſary*, and *perpetual*.

But you will ſay, May not the ſame Action, as for inſtance, *the killing of a Man*, be ſometimes Morally Good, and ſometimes Morally Evil? To wit, *Good*, when it is the Execution of Juſtice upon a Malefactor; and *Evil*, when it is the taking away the Life of an Innocent perſon?

To this I Anſwer: That this indeed is true of Actions, conſidered in their General Nature or Kind, but not conſidered in their Particular, Individual Inſtances. For generally ſpeaking; to take away the Life of a Man, is neither Morally *Good*, nor Morally *Evil*, but capable

ble of being either, as the Circumſtances of Things ſhall determine it; but every particular Act of Killing, is of neceſſity accompanied with, and determin'd by ſeveral Circumſtances, which actually, and unavoidably conſtitute, and denominate it either *Good* or *Evil*. And that, which being performed under ſuch, and ſuch Circumſtances, is *Morally Good*, cannot poſſibly, under the ſame Circumſtances, ever be *Morally Evil*. And ſo on the contrary.

From whence we inferr the Villainous falſehood of Two Aſſertions, held and maintained by ſome perſons, and too much countenanced by ſome others in the World. As,

Firſt, That *Good* and *Evil*, *Honeſt* and *Diſhoneſt*, are not Qualities exiſting or inherent in Things themſelves, but only founded in the Opinions of Men concerning Things. So that any Thing or Action, that has gained the General Approbation of any People, or Society of Men, ought, in reſpect of thoſe Perſons, to be eſteemed *Morally Good*, or *Honeſt*; and,

and, whatſoever falls under their general Diſapprobation, ought, upon the ſame account, to be reckoned *Morally Evil*, or *Diſhoneſt*; which alſo, they would ſeem to prove from the very ſignification of the word *Honeſtus*; which, originally and ſtrictly, ſignifies no more than *Creditable*, and is but a Derivative from *Honour*, which ſignifies *Credit* or *Honour*; and, according to the Opinion of ſome, (we know) That is lodged only in the Eſteem and Thoughts of thoſe who pay it, and not in the Thing, or Perſon, whom it is paid to. Thus for example, *Thieving*, or *Robbing*, was accounted amongſt the *Spartans* a gallant, worthy, and a creditable Thing; and conſequently, according to the Principle which we have mentioned, *Thievery*, amongſt the *Spartans*, was a practice Morally *Good* and *Honeſt*. Thus alſo, both with the *Grecians*, and the *Romans*, it was held a magnanimous, and highly laudable Act, for a man under any great or inſuperable miſery, or diſtreſs, to put an end to his own Life; and, accordingly, with thoſe who had ſuch

ſuch Thoughts of it, that, which we call Self-murther, was properly a *good*, an *honeſt*, and a *vertuous* Action. And, perſons of the higheſt, and moſt acknowledged Probity, and Vertue amongſt them; ſuch as *Marcus Cato*, and *Pomponius Atticus*, actually did it, and ſtand celebrated both by their Orators and Hiſtorians, for ſo doing. And I could alſo inſtance in other Actions of a fouler, and more unnatural Hue, which yet from the Approbation and Credit they have found in ſome Countries and Places, have paſſed for good Morality in thoſe places: But, out of reſpect to Common Humanity, as well as Divinity, I ſhall paſs them over. And thus much for the firſt Aſſertion, or Opinion.

Secondly, The ſecond Opinion, or Poſition, is, That *Good* and *Evil*, *Honeſt* and *Diſhoneſt*, are Originally founded in the Laws and Conſtitutions of the Soveraign Civil Power, enjoyning ſome Things, or Actions, and prohibiting others. So that when any thing is found conducing to the Welfare of the Publick, and thereupon

upon comes to be enacted by Governours into a Law, it is forthwith thereby rendred *Morally Good* and *Honeſt*; and, on the contrary, *Evil* and *Diſhoneſt*, when, upon its Contrariety to the publick Welfare, it ſtands prohibited and condemned by the ſame publick Authority.

This was the Opinion heretofore of *Epicurus*, as it is repreſented by *Gaſſendus*; who underſtood his Notions too well, to miſrepreſent them. And lately of *one* amongſt our ſelves, a leſs Philoſopher, though the greater Heathen of the two, the Infamous Author of the *Leviathan*. And the like lewd, ſcandalous, and immoral Doctrine, or worſe (if poſſible) may be found in ſome Writers, of another kind of Note and Character; whom, one would have thought, not only Religion, but Shame of the World might have taught better things.

Such as, for inſtance, *Bellarmine* himſelf; who, in his 4th. Book and 5th. Chapter, *De Pontifice Romano*, has this monſtrous Paſſage: "*That, if the Pope* "*ſhould through Error or Miſtake command*

" *Vices, and prohibit Vertues, the Church*
" *would be bound in Conſcience to believe*
" *Vice, to be Good, and Vertue Evil.* I ſhall give you the whole Paſſage in his own Words to a Tittle: " *Fides Catho-*
" *lica docet omnem virtutem eſſe Bonam,*
" *omne vitium eſſe Malum. Si autem erra-*
" *ret Papa, præcipiendo vitia vel prohibendo*
" *virtutes, teneretur Eccleſia credere vitia*
" *eſſe Bona & virtutes Malas, niſi vellet*
" *contra Conſcientiam peccare.* Good God! that any thing that wears the Name of a *Chriſtian*, or but of a *Man*, ſhould venture to own ſuch a villainous, impudent, and blaſphemous Aſſertion in the face of the World, as this! What? *muſt Murther, Adultery, Theft, Fraud, Extortion, Perjury, Drunkenneſs, Rebellion*, and the like, paſs for good and commendable Actions, and fit to be practiſed? And, *Mercy, Chaſtity, Juſtice, Truth, Temperance, Loyalty and Sincere Dealing* be accounted things *utterly evil, immoral*, and not to be followed by Men, in caſe the Pope, who is generally a weak, and almoſt always a wicked Man, ſhould by his

his miſtake, and *infallible ignorance*, command the former, and forbid the latter? Did Chriſt himſelf ever aſſume ſuch a Power, as to alter the Morality of Actions, and to transform Vice into Vertue, and Vertue into Vice by his bare Word? Certainly never did a groſſer Paradox, or a wickeder Sentence drop from the Mouth or Pen of any mortal Man, ſince Reaſon or Religion had any Being in the World.

And, I muſt confeſs, I have often with great Amazement wondred how it could poſſibly come from a Perſon of ſo great a Reputation both for Learning, and Vertue too, as the World allows *Bellarmine* to have been. But, when Men give themſelves over to the Defence of wicked Intereſts, and falſe Propoſitions, it is juſt with God to ſmite the greateſt Abilities with the greateſt Infatuations.

But as for theſe Two Poſitions, or Aſſertions; *That the Moral Good or Evil, the Honeſty or Diſhoneſty of humane Actions ſhould depend either upon the Opinions, or upon the Laws of Men*: They are certainly

falſe in *themſelves*, becauſe they are infinitely abſurd in *their Conſequences*. Some of which are ſuch as theſe. As,

Firſt, If the Moral Goodneſs, or Evil of men's Actions were Originally founded in, and ſo proceeded wholly from the Opinions, or Laws of Men, then it would follow, that they muſt change and vary according to the Change, and difference of the Opinions and Laws of Men: And conſequently, that the ſame Action, under exactly the ſame Circumſtances, may be morally Good *one day*, and morally Evil *another*; and morally Good in *one place*, and morally Evil in *another*: For as much as the ſame Soveraign Authority may enact or make a Law, commanding ſuch or ſuch an Action to day, and a quite contrary Law forbidding the ſame Action to morrow; and the very ſame Action, under the ſame Circumſtances, may be commanded by Law in *one Country*, and prohibited by Law in *another*. Which being ſo, the Conſequence is manifeſt, and the Abſurdity of the Conſequent intolerable.

Secondly,

Secondly, If the Moral *Goodneſs*, or *Evil* of men's Actions, depended Originally upon humane Laws, then thoſe Laws themſelves could neither be morally Good nor Evil: The Conſequence is evident; Becauſe thoſe Laws are not commanded, or prohibited by any *antecedent* humane Laws; And conſequently, if the Moral Goodneſs, or Evil of any Act were to be derived only from a *precedent* humane Law, Laws themſelves not ſuppoſing a dependance upon other *precedent* humane Laws, could have no *Moral Goodneſs*, or *Evil* in them. Which to aſſert of any humane Act (ſuch as all humane Laws eſſentially are, and muſt be) is certainly a very groſs Abſurdity.

Thirdly, If the Moral Goodneſs, or Evil of men's Actions were ſufficiently derived from humane Laws, or Conſtitutions; then, upon ſuppoſal, that a *Divine Law* ſhould (as it often does) command what is prohibited by humane Laws, and prohibit what is commanded by them, it would follow, that either ſuch Commands and Prohibitions of the

Divine Law doe not at all affect the Actions of Men in point of their Morality, ſo as to render them either Good or Evil, or, that the ſame Action, at the ſame time, may, in reſpect of the Divine Law Commanding it, be *Morally Good*; and, in reſpect of an humane Law forbidding it, be *Morally Evil*. Than which conſequence, nothing can be more clear, nor withall more abſurd.

And many more of the like nature, I could eaſily draw forth, and lay before you. Every falſe Principle or Propoſition being ſure to be attended with a numerous train of Abſurdities.

But, as to the Subject-matter now in hand; ſo far is the Morality of *humane* Actions, as to the Goodneſs or Evil of them, from being founded in any humane Law, that in very many, and thoſe the principal Inſtances of humane *Action*, it is not Originally founded in, or derived from ſo much as any *Poſitive*, *Divine* Law. There being a *Jus naturale* certainly antecedent to all *Jus poſitivum*, either

either Humane or Divine; and that ſuch, as reſults from the very Nature and Being of Things, as they ſtand in ſuch a certain Habitude, or Relation to one Another: To which Relation, whatſoever is done agreeably, is Morally and Eſſentially *Good*; and, whatſoever is done otherwiſe, is, at the ſame rate, *Morally Evil.*

And this I ſhall exemplifie in thoſe Two grand, comprehenſive, Moral Duties, which Man is for ever obliged to, *His Duty towards God, and his Duty towards his Neighbour.*

And firſt, for his Duty towards God; which is, *To love and obey him with all his Heart, and all his Soul.* It is certain, that for a rational, intelligent Creature to conform himſelf to the Will of God in all things, carries in it a moral Rectitude, or Goodneſs; and, to diſobey or oppoſe his Will in any thing, imports a moral Obliquity, before God ever deals forth any particular Law, or Command to ſuch a Creature; There being a general Obligation upon Man to obey all God's

Laws, *whenſoever they ſhall be declared*, before any particular Inſtance of Law comes actually to be declared. But now whence is this? Why; from that *Eſſential ſutableneſs*, which Obedience has to the Relation which is between a Rational Creature, and his Creator. Nothing in Nature being more irrational, and irregular, and conſequently more immoral, than for an Intelligent Being to oppoſe, or diſobey that Soveraign, Supreme *Will*, which gave him that Being, and has withall the ſole and abſolute diſpoſal of him in all his concerns. So that there needs no poſitive Law, or Sanction of God to ſtamp an Obliquity upon ſuch a diſobedience: Since it cleaves to it Eſſentially, and by way of Natural reſult from it, upon the account of that utter unſutableneſs which Diſobedience has to the Relation which Man naturally and neceſſarily ſtands in towards his Maker.

And then, in the next place, for *his Duty to his Neighbour*. The whole of which is comprized in that great Rule, *of doing, as a Man would be done by*. We may

may truly affirm, that the *Morality of this Rule* does not Originally derive it ſelf from thoſe words of our Saviour, *Matth.* 7. 12. *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould doe unto you, doe ye even ſo unto them* : No, nor yet from *Moſes* or the Prophets ; but it is as old as *Adam*, and bears date with humane Nature it ſelf ; as ſpringing from that Primitive Relation of *Equality*, which all men, as *fellow Creatures* and *fellow Subjects* to the ſame ſupreme Lord, bear to one another, in reſpect of that common Right, which every man has *equally* to his Life, and to the proper Comforts of Life ; and conſequently, to all things naturally neceſſary to the ſupport of both.

Now, whatſoever one man has a Right to keep, or poſſeſs, no other man can have a Right to take from him. So that no man has a Right to expect that *from*, or to do that *to* another, which that other has not an equal Right to expect from, and to doe to him. Which *Parity of Right*, as to all things purely Natural, being undoubtedly the Reſult of Nature it ſelf,

can

can any thing be inferred from thence more conformable to Reaſon, and conſequently of a greater moral Rectitude, than that ſuch an *Equality of Right* ſhould alſo cauſe an *Equality of Behaviour*, between Man and Man, as to all thoſe mutual Offices, and Intercourſes, in which Life, and the Happineſs of Life are concerned? Nothing certainly can ſhine out, and ſhew it ſelf by the meer Light of Reaſon, as an higher, and more unqueſtionable piece of Morality than *this*, nor as a more confeſſed Deviation from Morality than the contrary Practice.

From all which diſcourſe, I think we may without preſumption conclude, that the *Rationes Boni, & Mali*, the *Nature of Good and Evil*, as to the principal Inſtances of both, ſpring from that Eſſential Habitude, or Relation, which the Nature of one thing bears to another by vertue of that Order which they ſtand placed in, here in the World, by the very Law and Condition of their Creation; and, for that reaſon, doe and muſt precede all poſitive Laws, Sanctions, or Inſtitu-

Inſtitutions whatſoever. *Good* and *Evil* are in Morality, as the *Eaſt* and *Weſt* are in the Frame of the World; *founded* in, and *divided* by that fixt, and unalterable Situation, which they have reſpectively in the whole Body of the Univerſe: Or, as the *Right* Hand is diſcriminated from the *Left*, by a natural, neceſſary, and never-to-be-confounded Diſtinction.

And thus I have done with the *Firſt Thing* propoſed, and given you ſuch an account of the *Nature of Good and Evil*, as the meaſure of the preſent Exerciſe and Occaſion would allow. Paſs we now to the

2*d*. Which is to ſhew, That the way by which *Good* and *Evil* generally *operate upon the Mind of Man, is by thoſe Words or Names by which they are notified and conveyed to the Mind.* Words are the Signs and Symbols of Things; and, as in Accompts, Ciphers and Figures paſs for real Summs; ſo in the courſe of humane Affairs, Words and Names paſs for Things themſelves. For Things, or Objects, cannot enter into the *Mind*, as they

they ſubſiſt in themſelves, and by their own natural bulk paſs into the Apprehenſion; but they are taken in by their *Idea's*, their *Notions* or *Reſemblances*; which imprinting themſelves after a *ſpiritual, immaterial manner*, in the Imagination; and from thence, under a further *Refinement*, paſſing into the Intellect, are by that expreſſed by certain Words or Names found out, and invented by the Mind, for the Communication of its Conceptions, or Thoughts to others. So that as *Conceptions* are the Images, or Reſemblances of Things to the Mind within it ſelf. In like manner are Words or Names the Marks, Tokens or Reſemblances of thoſe Conceptions to the Minds of them whom we converſe with: Τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, being the known Maxim laid down by the Philoſopher, as the firſt and moſt fundamental Rule of all diſcourſe.

This therefore is certain, That in humane Life, or Converſation, *Words* ſtand for *Things*; the common buſineſs of the World not being capable of being managed

naged otherwiſe. For by theſe, Men come to know one another's Minds. By theſe, they Covenant and Confederate. By theſe, they Buy and Sell, they Deal and Traffick. In ſhort, Words are the great Inſtruments both of *Practice* and *Deſign*; which, for the moſt part, move wholly in the ſtrength of them. For as much as it is the Nature of Man both to *Will and to doe*, according to the perſwaſion he has of the *Good* and *Evil* of thoſe Things that come before him; and to take up his Perſwaſions according to the Repreſentations made to him of thoſe Qualities, by their reſpective Names or Appellations.

This is the true and natural Account of this matter; and it is all that I ſhall remark upon this ſecond Head. I proceed now to the

3*d*. Which is, to *ſhew the miſchief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows from the Miſapplication and Confuſion of thoſe Names*. And, in order to this, I ſhall premiſe theſe Two Conſiderations.

1. That

1. That the generality of Mankind is wholly and abſolutely governed by *Words* and Names: *Without*; nay, for the moſt part, even *againſt* the knowledge Men have of Things. The Multitude, or Common Rout, like a Drove of Sheep, or an Herd of Oxen, may be managed by any Noiſe, or Cry, which their Drivers ſhall accuſtom them to.

And, he who will ſet up for a skillfull manager of the Rabble, ſo long *as they have but Ears to hear*, needs never enquire, whether they have any *underſtanding* whereby to judge; but with two or three popular, empty Words, ſuch as *Popery and Superſtition*, *Right of the Subject*, *Liberty of Conſcience*, *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* well tuned and humour'd; may whiſtle them backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, till he is weary; and get up upon their Backs when he is ſo.

As for the *meaning* of the Word it ſelf, that may ſhift for it ſelf: And, as for *the Senſe and Reaſon of it*, that has little or nothing to doe here; only let it ſound full and round, and chime right to the Humour,

mour, which is at preſent a Gog, (juſt as a big, long, rattling Name is ſaid to command even Adoration from a *Spaniard*,) and, no doubt, with this powerfull, ſenſeleſs Engine the *Rabble-driver*, ſhall be able to carry all before him, or to draw all after him, as he pleaſes. For, a plauſible, inſignificant Word, in the mouth of an expert Demagogue, is a dangerous and a dreadfull Weapon.

You know, when *Cæſar*'s Army mutinied, and grew troubleſome, no Argument from Intereſt, or Reaſon, could ſatisfie or appeaſe them: But, as ſoon as he gave them the Appellation of *Quirites*, the Tumult was immediately huſh'd; and all were quiet and content, and took that *one Word* in good payment for all. Such is the trivial ſlightneſs and levity of moſt minds. And indeed, take any Paſſion of the Soul of Man, while it is predominant, and a float, and, juſt in the critical height of it, nick it with ſome *lucky*, or *unlucky* Word, and you may as certainly over-rule into your own purpoſe, as a ſpark of Fire, falling upon Gun-

Gun-powder, will infallibly blow it up.

The Truth is, he who ſhall duly conſider theſe matters, will find that there is a certain *bewitchery*, or faſcination in Words, which makes them operate with a force beyond what we can naturally give an account of. For, would not a man think, ill Deeds, and ſhrewd Turns, ſhould reach further, and ſtrike deeper than ill Words? And yet many Inſtances might be given, in which Men have much more eaſily pardoned ill things *done*, than ill Things *ſaid* againſt them: Such a peculiar rancour and venom doe they leave behind them in men's Minds, and ſo much more poyſonouſly and incurably does the Serpent bite with his *Tongue*, than with his *Teeth*.

Nor are Men prevailed upon at this odd, unaccountable rate, by bare Words, only through a *defect* of Knowledge; but ſometimes alſo doe they ſuffer themſelves to be carried away with theſe *Puffs of Wind*, even *contrary* to Knowledge and Experience it ſelf. For otherwiſe, how could Men be brought to ſurrender up

their

their Reaſon, their Intereſt, and their Credit to Flattery? Groſs, fulſome, abuſive Flattery; indeed more abuſive and reproachfull upon a true eſtimate of Things and Perſons, than the rudeſt Scoffs, and the ſharpeſt Invectives. Yet ſo it is, that though Men know themſelves utterly void of thoſe Qualities and Perfections, which the impudent Sycophant, at the ſame time, both aſcribes to them, and in his Sleeve laughs at them for believing; nay, though *they know* that the Flatterer himſelf knows the falſehood of his own Flatteries, yet they ſwallow the fallacious Morſel, love the Impoſtor, and with both Arms hug the Abuſe; And that to ſuch a degree, that no Offices of Friendſhip, no real Services ſhall be able to lie in the Balance againſt thoſe luſcious Falſehoods, which Flattery ſhall feed the Mind of a *Fool in Power* with; The *ſweetneſs* of the one infinitely over-comes the *ſubſtance* of the other.

And therefore, you ſhall ſeldom ſee, that ſuch an one cares to have Men of Worth, Honeſty, and Veracity about

him; For, ſuch perſons cannot fall down and worſhip Stocks and Stones, though they are placed never ſo high above them. But their *Yea* is *Yea*, and their *Nay*, *Nay*; and, they cannot admire a *Fox* for his Sincerity, a *Wolf* for his Generoſity, nor an *Aſs* for his Wit and Ingenuity; And therefore can never be acceptable to thoſe whoſe whole Credit, Intereſt, and Advantage lies in their not appearing to the World, what they are really in themſelves. None are, or can be welcome to ſuch, but thoſe who Speak *Paint* and *Waſh*; for that is the Thing they *love*; and, no wonder, ſince it is the Thing they *need*.

There is hardly any Rank, Order or Degree of Men, but more or leſs have been captivated, and enſlaved by Words. It is a Weakneſs, or rather a Fate, which attends both high and low. The Statesman, who holds the Helm, as well as the Peaſant who holds the Plough. So that if ever you find an *Ignoramus* in Place and Power, and can have ſo little Conſcience, and ſo much Confidence, as to

tell

tell him to his face, that he has a Wit and an underſtanding above all the World beſides; and *That what his own Reaſon cannot ſuggeſt to him, neither can the United Reaſon of all Mankind put together*; I dare undertake, that, as fulſome a Doſe as you give him, he ſhall readily take it down, and admit the Commendation, though he cannot believe the Thing: *Blanditiæ etiam cùm excluduntur, placent*; ſays *Seneca*. Tell him, that no Hiſtory, or Antiquity, can match his Policies, and his Conduct; and preſently the Sot (becauſe he knows neither Hiſtory, nor Antiquity) ſhall begin to *meaſure himſelf by himſelf*, (which is the only ſure way for him not to fall ſhort;) and ſo immediately amongſt his *outward Admirers, and his inward Deſpiſers*, Vouched alſo by a *Teſte Me-ipſo*, he ſteps forth an exact Politician; and, by a wonderfull, and new way of Arguing, proves himſelf *no fool*, becauſe, forſooth, the Sycophant, who tells him ſo, is an Egregious *Knave*.

The Words of a great Self-opiniator, and a bitter Reviler of the Clergy.

But to give you yet a groſſer Inſtance of the force of Words, and of the extreme Vanity of man's Nature in being influenced by them, hardly ſhall you meet with any perſon, Man or Woman, ſo aged, or ill-favoured, but if you will venture to commend them for their Comelineſs; nay, and for their Youth too; though *Time out of mind* is wrote upon every line of their face; yet they ſhall take it very well at your hands, and begin to think with themſelves, that certainly they have ſome Perfections, which the generality of the World are not ſo happy as to be aware of.

But now, are not theſe (think we) ſtrange Self-deluſions, and yet atteſted by common Experience, almoſt every day? But whence, in the mean time, can all this proceed, but from that beſotting Intoxication, which this *Verbal* Magick (as I may ſo call it) brings upon the Mind of Man? For, can any thing in Nature have a more certain, deep, and undeniable Effect, than Folly has upon man's Mind, and Age upon his Body? And

And yet we ſee, that in both theſe, Words are able to perſwade men out of what they *find* and *feel*, to reverſe the very Impreſſions of Senſe, and to amuſe men with Fancies and Paradoxes even in ſpight of Nature, and Experience. But, ſince it would be endleſs to purſue all the Particulars in which this Humour ſhews it ſelf; whoſoever would have one full, lively and complete view of an empty, ſhallow, ſelf-opinion'd Grandee, ſurrounded by his Flatterers, (like a choice Diſh of Meat by a company of fellows *commending*, and *devouring* it at the ſame time,) let him caſt his Eye upon *Ahab* in the midſt of his falſe Prophets, 1 *Kings* 22. where we have them all with one Voice for giving him a caſt of their Court-Prophecy, and ſending him, in a Complement, to be knockt on the Head at *Ramoth Gilead*. But, ſays *Jehoſaphat*, (who ſmelt the *Paraſite* through the *Prophet*) in the 7th. *verſ. Is there not a Prophet of the Lord beſides, that we may enquire of him? Why yes*, ſays *Ahab*, *there is yet one man by whom we may enquire of the Lord; but I hate*

him, for he doth not prophecy Good concerning me, but Evil. Ay! that was his crime; the poor man was ſo *good* a *Subject*, and ſo *bad* a *Courtier*, as to venture to ſerve, and ſave his Prince, whether he would or no; for, it ſeems, to give *Ahab* ſuch warning, as might infallibly have prevented his Deſtruction, was eſteemed by him *Evil*, and to puſh him on head-long into it, becauſe he was fond of it, was accounted *Good*. Theſe were his new meaſures of *Good* and *Evil*. And therefore, thoſe who knew how to *make their Court* better, (as the Word is) tell him a bold Lye in God's Name, and therewith ſend him packing to his certain doom; thus calling *Evil good* at the coſt of their Prince's Crown, and his Life too. But what cared they? they knew that it would pleaſe, and that was enough for them; there being always a ſort of Men in the World, (whom others have an Intereſt to ſerve by,) who had rather a great deal be *pleaſed*, than be *ſafe*. *Strike* them under the *fifth Rib*; provided at the ſame time you *kiſs* them too, as *Joab* ſerved *Abner*,

Abner, and you may both deſtroy and oblige them with the ſame blow.

Accordingly in the 30th. of *Iſaiah*, we find ſome arrived to that pitch of Sottiſhneſs, and ſo much in love with their own Ruin, as to own plainly and roundly what they would be at; in the 10th. verſe; *Propheſie not unto us, ſay they, right things, but propheſie to us ſmooth things.* As if they had ſaid, Doe but oil the Razor for us, and let us alone to cut our own Throats. Such an Enchantment is there in Words; and ſo fine a thing does it ſeem to ſome, to be ruined plauſibly, and to be uſhered to their deſtruction with Panegyrick and Acclamation; A ſhamefull, though irrefragable Argument of the abſurd Empire, and Uſurpation of Words over Things; and, that the greateſt Affairs, and moſt important Intereſts of the World, are carried on by Things, not as they *are*, but as they are *called*.

And thus much for the firſt Thing, which I thought neceſſary to premiſe to the Proſecution of our Third Particular.

2. The other Thing to be premiſed, is this; That as the *generality of Men* are wholly govern'd by Names, and Words; ſo there is nothing, in which they are ſo remarkably, and powerfully govern'd by them, as in matters of *Good* and *Evil*; ſo far as theſe Qualities relate to, and affect the Actions of men. A thing certainly of a moſt fatal and pernicious import. For, though in matters of *meer* Speculation, it is not much the Concern of Society, whether or no men proceed wholly upon *Truſt*, and take the bare Word of others, for what they aſſent to; ſince it is not much material to the Welfare either of Government, or of themſelves, whether they Opine right or wrong, and whether they be Philoſophers, or no. But it is vaſtly the concern both of Government, and of themſelves too, whether they be morally *good* or *bad*, *honeſt* or *diſhoneſt*. And ſurely, it is hardly poſſible for men to make it their buſineſs to be *vertuous* or *honeſt*, while Vices are called and pointed out to them by the *Names* of Vertues; and they all the

the while, ſuppoſe the Nature of Things to be truly and faithfully ſignified by their Names, and thereupon *believe* as they hear, and *practiſe* as they believe. And that this is the courſe of much the greateſt part of the World thus to take up their Perſwaſions concerning *Good* and *Evil* by an *Implicit Faith*, and a full acquieſcence in the Word of thoſe, who ſhall repreſent things to them under theſe Characters, I ſhall prove by Two Reaſons; and thoſe ſuch as (I fear) will not onely be found Reaſons to evince that men Actually doe ſo; but alſo ſad Demonſtrations to conclude that they are never like to doe otherwiſe.

Firſt, The Firſt of which ſhall be taken from that Similitude, Neighbourhood, and Affinity, which is between *Vice* and *Vertue*, *Good* and *Evil*, in ſeveral notable Inſtances of Each. For, though the General Natures, and Definitions of theſe Qualities are ſufficiently diſtant from one another, and ſo in no danger of a promiſcuous Confuſion; yet when they come to ſubſiſt in Particulars,

and

and to be cloathed, and attended with ſeveral Accidents, and Circumſtances, the Caſe is hereby much altered, for then, the Diſcernment is neither ſo eaſie, nor yet ſo certain. Thus it is not always ſo obvious to diſtinguiſh between an Act of Liberality, and an Act of Prodigality; between an Act of Courage, and an Act of Raſhneſs; an Act of Puſillanimity, and an Act of great Modeſty or Humility: Nay, and ſome have had the good Luck to have their very *Dullneſs* dignified with the Name of *Gravity*, and to be no ſmall Gainers by the Miſtake. And many more ſuch Actions of Dubious Quality, might be inſtanced in, too numerous to be here recounted, or inſiſted on. In all which, and the like, it requiring too great a Sagacity for vulgar Minds to draw the Line nicely and exactly between *Vice* and *Vertue*, and to adjuſt the due Limits of Each; it is no Wonder, if moſt Men attempt not a laborious Scrutiny into Things themſelves, but only take *Names* and *Words*, as they firſt come, and ſo without any more

more adoe reſt in them; it being ſo much eaſier, in all Diſquiſitions of Truth, to ſuppoſe, than to prove; and to believe, than to diſtinguiſh.

Secondly, The other Reaſon of the ſame ſhall be taken from the Great, and Natural Inability of moſt Men to judge exactly of Things; which makes it very difficult for them to diſcern the real *Good*, and *Evil*, of what comes before them, to conſider, and weigh Circumſtances, to ſcatter, and look through the Miſts of Errour, and ſo ſeparate Appearances from Realities. For the greater Part of Mankind, is but ſlow and dull of Apprehenſion; and therefore in many Caſes under a Neceſſity of Seeing with other Men's Eyes, and judging with other Men's Underſtandings. *Nature* having manifeſtly contrived things ſo, that the *Vulgar*, and the *Many*, are fit only to be *led*, or *driven*, but by no means fit to guide, or direct themſelves.

To which their want of judging or diſcerning Abilities, we may add alſo their Want of Leiſure, and Opportuni-

ty

ty to apply their Minds to ſuch a ſerious and attent Conſideration, as may let them into a full Diſcovery of the true *Goodneſs*, and *Evil* of Things which are Qualities, which ſeldom diſplay themſelves to the firſt View: For in moſt things, *Good* and *Evil* lie ſhuffled, and thruſt up together in a confuſed Heap; and it is Study and Intention of Thought which muſt draw them forth and range them under their diſtinct Heads. But there can be no Study, without Time; and the Mind muſt abide and dwell upon Things, or be always a Stranger to the *Inſide* of them. *Through deſire* (ſays *Solomon*) *a Man having ſeparated himſelf, ſeeketh and intermedleth with all Wiſdom*, Prov. 18. 12. There muſt be Leiſure and Retirement, Solitude, and a Sequeſtration of a Man's ſelf from the Noiſe, and Toil of the World: For Truth ſcorns to be ſeen by Eyes too much fixt upon inferiour Objects. It lies too deep to be fetcht up with the *Plough*, and too cloſe to be beaten out with the *Hammer*. It dwells not in Shops or Work-Houſes; nor till the

the late Age was it ever known, that any one ſerved Seven Years to a Smith, or a Taylor, that he might at the End thereof, proceed Maſter of *any other Arts*, but ſuch as thoſe Trades taught him; and much leſs that he ſhould commence Doctor, or Divine from the Shop-board, or the Anvil; or from whiſtling to a Team, come to preach to a Congregation.

Theſe were the peculiar, extraordinary Privileges of the late bleſſed Times of *Light* and *Inſpiration*: Otherwiſe Nature will ſtill hold on its old Courſe, never doing any thing which is conſiderable without the Aſſiſtance of its two great Helps, *Art*, and *Induſtry*. But above all, the Knowledge of what is *Good*, and what is *Evil*, what *ought*, and what *ought not* to be done, in the ſeveral Offices and Relations of Life, is a thing too large to be compaſſed, and too hard to be maſtered, without Brains and Study, Parts, and Contemplation; which Providence never thought fit to make much the greateſt Part of Mankind,

kind, Poſſeſſors of. And conſequently thoſe who are not ſo, muſt, for the Knowledge of moſt things, depend upon thoſe who are; and receive their Information concerning *Good* and *Evil*, from ſuch *Verbal* or *Nominal* Repreſentations of Each, as ſhall be imparted to them by thoſe, whoſe Ability, and Integrity they have Cauſe to rely upon, for a faithfull Account of theſe Matters.

And thus, from theſe two great Conſiderations premiſed: 1*ſt*. That the Generality of the World are wholly governed by *Words* and *Names*; And 2*dly*. That the Chief Inſtance in which they are ſo, is in ſuch *Words* and *Names*, as import the *Good* or *Evil* of things; (*Which* both the Difficulty of Things themſelves, and the very Condition of humane Nature conſtrains much the greateſt Part of Mankind to take wholly upon Truſt:) I ſay, from theſe two Conſiderations, muſt needs be inferr'd, *What a fatal*, deviliſh, and deſtructive Effect the Miſapplication, and Confuſion of thoſe great Governing Names of *Good* and *Evil*, muſt inevi-

inevitably have upon the Societies of Men. The comprehenſive Miſchief of which, will appear from this, that it takes in *both* thoſe ways, by which the greateſt Evils, and Calamities, which are incident to Man, do directly break in upon him.

The *Firſt* of which is by his *being deceived*, and the *Second* by his *being miſrepreſented*. And Firſt, *for the Firſt of theſe*. I do not in the leaſt doubt, but if a true and juſt Computation could be made of all the Miſeries, and Misfortunes that befall Men in this World, Two Thirds of them, at leaſt, would be found reſolveable into their being deceived by falſe Appearances of *Good*; Firſt deluding their Apprehenſions, and then by Natural Conſequence perverting their Actions; from which are the great *Iſſues of Life and Death*; ſince according to the Eternal Sanction of God and Nature, ſuch as a Man's Actions are for *Good* or *Evil*, ſuch ought alſo his Condition to be for *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*.

Now

Now all Deception in the Courſe of Life is indeed nothing elſe, but a *Lye* reduced to *Practice*, and Falſhood paſſing from Words into Things.

For is a Man impoveriſhed, and undone by the Purchaſe of an Eſtate? why; it is, becauſe he bought an Impoſture; pay'd down his Money for a Lye, and by the help of the beſt and ableſt Counſel (forſooth) that could be had, took a *Bad* Title for a *Good*.

Is a Man unfortunate in Marriage? ſtill it is, becauſe he was deceived; and put his Neck into the *Snare*, before he put it into the *Yoke*, and ſo took that for Vertue, and Affection, which was nothing but Vice in a Diſguiſe, and a Deviliſh Humour under a Demure Look.

Is he again unhappy, and calamitous in his Friendſhips? Why; in this alſo, it is becauſe he built upon the Air, and trod upon a Quick-ſand, and took that for Kindneſs, and Sincerity, which was onely Malice, and Deſign, ſeeking an Opportunity to ruine him effectually, and to overturn him in all his Intereſts by the

Sure,

Sure, but fatal Handle of his own good Nature, and Credulity.

And laſtly, is a Man betrayed, loſt, and blown by ſuch Agents, and Inſtruments, as he imploys in his greateſt and neareſt Concerns? Why, ſtill the Cauſe of it is from this, that he miſplaced his Confidence, took Hypocriſie for Fidelity, and ſo relied upon the Services of a Pack of Villains, who deſigned nothing but their own Game, and to *ſtake* him, while they *played* for themſelves.

But not to mention any more Particulars, there is no Eſtate, Office, or Condition of Life whatſoever, but groans, and labours under the Killing Truth of what we have aſſerted.

For it is this which ſupplants not onely private Perſons, but Kingdoms and Governments, by keeping them ignorant of their own Strengths and Weakneſſes; and it is evident that Governments may be equally deſtroyed by an Ignorance of either. For the Weak by thinking themſelves ſtrong, are induced to venture and proclaim War againſt that which ruins

them; And the Strong, by conceiting themſelves weak, are thereby rendred as unactive, and conſequently as uſeleſs, as if they really were ſo. *In* Luke 14. 31. *When a King with Ten Thouſand is to meet a King coming againſt him with Twenty Thouſand*, our Saviour adviſes him, before he ventures the Iſſue of a Battel, *to ſit down and conſider.* But now a falſe glozing Paraſite would give him quite another Kind of Counſel, and bid him onely reckon his *Ten* Thouſand *Forty*, call his *Fool-hardineſs* Valour, and then he may go on *boldly*, becauſe *blindly*, and by miſtaking himſelf for a *Lyon*, come to periſh like an *Aſs*.

In ſhort, it is this great Plague of the World *Deception*, which takes wrong Meaſures, and makes falſe Muſters almoſt in every Thing; which ſounds a Retreat inſtead of a Charge, and a Charge inſtead of a Retreat; which overthrows whole Armies, and ſometimes by one lying Word treacherouſly caſt out, turns the Fate and Fortune of States and Empires, and lays the moſt flouriſhing

ing Monarchies in the Duſt. A blind Guide is certainly a great Miſchief; but a Guide that *blinds* thoſe, whom he ſhould *lead*, is *undoubtedly* a much greater.

Secondly, The other great and undoing Miſchief, which befalls Men upon the fore-mentioned Account, is by their being *miſ-repreſented*. Now as by *calling Evil Good*, a Man is miſrepreſented to himſelf in the Way of *Flattery*; ſo by *calling good Evil*, he is miſrepreſented to others in the Way of *Slander*, and Detraction. I ſay Detraction, that killing, poyſoned *Arrow* drawn out of the Devil's *Quiver*, which is always flying abroad, and doing Execution in the *Dark*; againſt which no Vertue is a Defence, no Innocence a Security. For as by *Flattery*, a Man is uſually brought to open his Boſome to his Mortal Enemy; ſo by *Detraction*, and a ſlanderous Miſ-report of Perſons, he is often brought to ſhut the ſame even to his beſt and trueſt Friends. In both Caſes he receives a fatal Blow, ſince that which lays a Man open to an Enemy, and that which ſtrips him of a

Friends, equally attacks him in all thoſe Intereſts, that are capable of being weakened by the one, and ſupported by the other.

The moſt direct and efficacious way to ruine any Man, is to miſ-repreſent him; and it often ſo falls out, that it wounds on both ſides, and not onely mauls the Perſon miſ-repreſented, but him alſo, to whom he is miſ-repreſented; For if he be Great, and Powerfull (as *Spies* and *Pick-thanks* ſeldom apply to any others) it generally provokes him through miſtake to perſecute, and tyrannize over; nay, and ſometimes, even, to dip his Hands in the Blood of the Innocent, and the Juſt, and thereby involve himſelf in ſuch a Guilt, as ſhall Arm Heaven and Earth againſt him, the Vengeance of God, and the Indignation of Men; who will both eſpouſe the Quarrel of a bleeding Innocence, and heartily joyn Forces againſt an inſulting Baſeneſs, eſpecially when back'd with Greatneſs, and ſet on by Miſ-information. Hiſtories are full of ſuch Examples.

Beſides,

Beſides, that it is rarely found, that Men hold their Greatneſs for term of Life; though their *Baſeneſs*, for the moſt part, they do; and then, according to the common Viciſſitude, and Wheel of Things, the Proud, and the Inſolent muſt take their Turn too; and after long trampling upon others, come, at length, *Plaudente, & gaudente Mundo*, to be trampled upon themſelves. For, as *Tully* has it in his Oration for *Milo*; *Non ſemper Viator à Latrone, nonnunquam etiam Latro à Viatore occiditur.*

But, to paſs from particulars to Communities, nothing can be imagined more deſtructive to Society than this villainous Practice. For it robs the Publick of all that Benefit, and Advantage, that it may juſtly claim, and ought to *receive*, from the Worth and Vertue of particular Perſons, by rendring their Vertue utterly inſignificant. For *Good* it ſelf can do no good, while it paſſes for *Evil*; and an honeſt Man is, in effect, uſeleſs, while he is accounted a *Knave*. Both Things and Perſons ſubſiſt by their Reputation.

An unjuſt Sentence from a Tribunal may condemn an Innocent Perſon; but Miſ-repreſentation condemns Innocence it ſelf. For it is this which revives, and imitates that unhumane Barbarity of the Old Heathen Perſecutors, wrapping up Chriſtians in the Skins of wild Beaſts, that ſo they might be worried and torn in pieces by Dogs. Do but paint an *Angel* black, and that is enough to make him paſs for a *Devil*. *Let us blacken him, let us blacken him what we can*, ſaid that Miſereant * *Harriſon*, of the bleſſed King, upon the *Wording* and drawing up his Charge againſt his approaching Tryal. And when any Man is to be run down, and ſacrific'd to the Luſt of his Enemies, as that Royal Martyr was, even his *Good* (according to the Apoſtle's phraſe) *ſhall be Evil ſpoken of*. He muſt firſt be undermin'd, and then undone. The Practice is uſual, and the Method natural.

* A Preaching Colonel of the Parliament-Army, and a Chief Actor in the Murder of K. *Charles* the Firſt; Notable before, for having killed ſeveral after Quarter given them by others; and uſing theſe Words in the doing it, *Curſed be he, who does the work of the Lord negligently*. He was by Extraction a Butcher's Son; and accordingly, in his Practices all along, more a Butcher than his Father.

ral. But, to give you the whole Malice of it in one Word; it is a Weapon forged in Hell, and formed by the prime Artificer, and Engineer of all Miſchief, the *Devil*; and none but that God, who knows all Things, and can do all Things, can protect the beſt of Men againſt it.

To which God, the Fountain of all Good, and the Hater of all Evil, be rendred, and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now, and for ever-more. Amen.

Prevention of Sin

AN

Unvaluable Mercy:

OR, A

SERMON

Preached upon that Subject,

On 1 *SAM.* XXV. 32, 33.

At *Christ-Church*, Oxon. *Nov.* 10. 1678.

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1 SAM. XXV. 32, 33.

And David ſaid to Abigail; Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, who ſent thee this Day to meet me.

And bleſſed be thy Advice, and bleſſed be thou, who haſt kept me this day from coming to ſhed blood, and from avenging my ſelf with my own Hand.

THeſe Words are *David's* Retractation, or laying down of a bloody and revengefull Reſolution; which, for a while,

a-while, his heart had ſwelled with, and carried him on with the higheſt Tranſport of Rage to proſecute. A Reſolution took up from the Senſe of a groſs Indignity, and Affront paſſed upon him, in Recompence of a ſignal Favour and Kindneſs received from him. For during his Exile, and Flight before *Saul*; in which he was frequently put to all the Hardſhips, which uſually befall the Weak, flying before the Strong; there happening a great, and ſolemn Feſtivity, (ſuch as the *Sheep-ſhearings* uſed to be in thoſe Eaſtern Countries,) he condeſcends, by an Honourable, and Kind Meſſage, to beg of a Rich, and Great Man, ſome ſmall Repaſt, and Supply for himſelf, and his poor haraſſed Companions, at that Notable Time of Joy, and Feaſting: A Time that might make any thing, that look'd like Want, or Hunger, no leſs an Abſurdity, than a Miſery, to all that were round about him. And, as if the Greatneſs of the Asker, and the Smallneſs of the Thing asked, had not been ſufficient to inforce his Requeſt, he *adds* a Com-

a Commemoration of his own Generous, and Noble Uſage of the Perſon, whom he thus addreſſed to; ſhewing how that he had been a Wall, and a Bulwark, to all that belong'd to him, a Safeguard to his Eſtate, and a Keeper of his Flocks; and that both from the Violence of Robbers, and the Licence of his own Souldiers; who could much more eaſily have carved themſelves their own Proviſions, than ſo great a Spirit ſtoop ſo low as to ask them.

But in anſwer to this, (as nothing is ſo rude and inſolent as a wealthy Ruſtick) all this his Kindneſs is overlooked, his Requeſt rejected, and his Perſon moſt unworthily railed at. Such being the Nature of ſome baſe Minds, that they can never do ill Turns, but they muſt double them with ill Words too. And thus *David's* Meſſengers are ſent back to him, like ſo many Sharks, and Runnagates; only for endeavouring to complement an ill Nature out of it ſelf; and ſeeking that by Petition, which they might have commanded by their Sword.

And

And now, who would not but think, that ſuch ungratefull Uſage, heightned with ſuch reproachfull Language, might warrant the Juſtice of the ſharpeſt Revenge; even of ſuch a Revenge, as now began to boil, and burn in the Breaſt of this great Warrior? For ſurely, if any thing may juſtly call up the utmoſt of a Man's Rage, it ſhould be bitter and contumelious Words from an unprovoked Inferior; and, if any thing can legalize Revenge, it ſhould be Injuries from an extremely obliged Perſon. But for all this, Revenge, we ſee, is ſo much the Prerogative of the Almighty, ſo abſolutely the Peculiar of Heaven, that no Conſideration whatſoever can empower, even the beſt Men, to aſſume the Execution of it in their own Caſe. And therefore *David*, by an happy and ſeaſonable Pacification, being took off from acting that *Bloody* Tragedy, which he was juſt now entring upon, and ſo turning his Eyes from the Baſeneſs of him, who had ſtirr'd up his Revenge, to the Goodneſs of that God, who had prevented it; he breaks forth

forth into these Triumphant Praises, and Doxologies, expres'd in the Text: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who has kept me this Day from shedding Blood*, and from *avenging my self with my own Hand.*

Which Words, together with those going before in the same Verse, naturally afford us this Doctrinal Proposition, which shall be the Subject of the following Discourse. Namely, That *Prevention of Sin is one of the greatest Mercies, that God can vouchsafe a Man in this World.*

The Prosecution of which shall lie in these two Things: *First*, To *prove* the Proposition; *Secondly*, To *apply* it.

And *First*, for the Proof of it: The transcendent Greatness of this *Sin preventing Mercy*, is demonstrable from these Four following Considerations.

1. Of the Condition which the Sinner is in, when this Mercy is vouchsafed him.

2. Of the Principle or Fountain, from whence this *Prevention* of Sin does proceed.

3. Of

3. Of the Hazard a Man runs, if the Commiſſion of Sin be not *prevented*, whether ever it will come to be *pardoned*: And,

4*ly* and *Laſtly*, Of the Advantages accruing to the Soul from the *Prevention* of Sin, above what can be had from the bare *Pardon* of it, in Caſe it comes to be *pardoned*.

Of theſe in their Order: And *Firſt*, We are to take an Eſtimate of the Greatneſs of this Mercy, from the Condition it finds the Sinner in, when God is pleaſed to vouchſafe it to him. It finds him in the direct way to Death and Deſtruction; and, which is worſe, wholly unable to help himſelf. For he is actually under the Power of a Temptation, and the Sway of an impetuous Luſt; both hurrying him on to ſatisfie the Cravings of it, by ſome wicked Action. He is poſſeſſed, and acted by a Paſſion, which, for the preſent, abſolutely over-rules him; and ſo can no more recover himſelf, than a Bowl rowling down an Hill, ſtop it ſelf in the midſt of its Career. It is

a

a Maxim in the Philoſophy of ſome, *That whatſoever is once in actual Motion, will move for ever, if it be not hindred.*

So a Man, being under the Drift of any Paſſion, will ſtill follow the Impulſe of it, till ſomething interpoſe, and by a ſtronger Impulſe turn him another way: But in this Caſe we can find no Principle within him ſtrong enough to counter-Act that Principle, and to relieve him. For, if it be any, it muſt be either, *Firſt*, the Judgment of his Reaſon; or, *Secondly*, the free Choice of his Will.

But from the Firſt of theſe there can be no help for him in his preſent Condition. For, while a Man is ingaged in any ſinfull Purpoſe, through the Prevalence of any Paſſion, during the Continuance of that Paſſion, he fully approves of whatſoever he is carried on to doe in the Strength of it; and judges it, under his preſent Circumſtances, the Beſt and moſt Rational Courſe that he can take. Thus we ſee, when *Jonas* was under the Paſſion of Anger, and God asked him, *Whether he did well to be angry?* He anſwered,

ſwered, *I do well to be angry even unto Death*, Jonas 4. 9. And when *Saul* was under his perſecuting Fit, what he did, appeared to him good and neceſſary, Acts 26. 9. *I verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to doe many things contrary to the Name of Jeſus.* But to go no further than the Text; Do we not think, that while *David's* Heart was full of his revengefull Deſign, it had blinded, and perverted his reaſon ſo far, that it ſtruck in wholly with his Paſſion, and told him, That the Bloody purpoſe he was going to execute, was Juſt, Magnanimous, and moſt becoming ſuch a Perſon, and ſo dealt with, as he was? This being ſo, how is it poſſible for a Man under a Paſſion, to receive any Succour from his Judgment, or Reaſon, which is made a Party in the whole Action, and influenced to a preſent Approbation of all the ill Things which his Paſſion can ſuggeſt? *This is moſt certain*; and every Man may find it by Experience, (if he will but impartially reflect upon the Method of his own Actings, and the Motions of his own Mind,)

That,

That, while he is under any Paſſion, he thinks and judges quite otherwiſe of the proper Object of that Paſſion, from what he does, when he is out of it. Take a Man under the Tranſports of a Vehement Rage or Revenge, and he paſſes a very different Judgment upon Murder and Blood-ſhed, from what he does when his Revenge is over, and the Flame of his Fury ſpent. Take a Man poſſeſſed with a ſtrong and immoderate Deſire of any thing, and you ſhall find, that the Worth and Excellency of that thing appears much greater, and more dazling to the Eye of his Mind, than it does when that Deſire either by ſatisfaction, or otherwiſe is quite extinguiſhed. So that while Paſſion is upon the Wing, and the Man fully engaged in the Proſecution of ſome unlawfull Object, no Remedy or Controll is to be expected from his Reaſon, which is wholly gain'd over to judge in favour of it. The Fumes of his Paſſion do as really intoxicate, and confound his judging and diſcerning Faculty, as the Fumes of Drink

diſcompoſe and ſtupify the Brain of a Man over-charged with it. When his Drink indeed is over, he ſees the Folly and the Abſurdity, the Madneſs, and the Vileneſs of thoſe Things, which before he acted with full Complacency, and Approbation. Paſſion is the Drunkenneſs of the Mind; and therefore, in its preſent Workings not controllable by Reaſon; foraſmuch as the proper Effect of it is, for the Time, to ſuperſede the Workings of Reaſon. *This* Principle therefore being able to doe nothing to the ſtopping of a Man, in the eager purſuit of his Sin; there remains no other, that can be ſuppoſed able to doe any thing upon the Soul, but that *Second* mention'd, to wit, *The Choice of his Will.* But this alſo is as much diſabled from recovering a Man fully intent upon the Proſecution of any of his Luſts, as the former. For all the Time, that a Man is ſo, he abſolutely wills, and is fully pleaſed with what he is deſigning, or going about. And whatſoever perfectly pleaſes the Will, over-powers it; for it fixes

fixes and determines the Inclination of it, to that one Thing which is before it; and ſo fills up all its Poſſibilities of Indifference, that there is actually no room for Choice. He who is under the Power of Melancholy, is pleaſed with his being ſo. He who is angry, delights in nothing ſo much as in the venting of his Rage. And he who is luſtfull, places his greateſt Satisfaction in a Slaviſh following of the Dictates of his Luſt. And ſo long as the Will, and the Affections are pleaſed, and exceedingly gratified in any Courſe of Acting, it is impoſſible for a Man (ſo far as he is at his own diſpoſal) not to continue in it; or, by any Principle within him, to be diverted or took off from it.

From all which we ſee, that when a Man has *took up* a full Purpoſe of Sinning, he is hurried on to it in the Strength of all thoſe Principles, which Nature has given him to act by: For Sin having depraved his *Judgment*, and got poſſeſſion of his *Will*, there is no other Principle left him naturally, by which

he can make head againſt it. Nor is this all; but to theſe Internal Diſpoſitions to Sin, add the External Opportunities and Occaſions concurring with them, and removing all Letts, and Rubbs out of the Way, and (as it were) making the *Path* of Deſtruction *plain before the Sinner's Face*; ſo that he may run his Courſe freely, and without Interruption. Nay, when Opportunities ſhall lie ſo fair, as not only to *permit*, but even to *invite*, and further a Progreſs in Sin; So that the Sinner ſhall ſet forth, like a Ship launched into the wide Sea; not only well built and rigg'd, but alſo carried on with full *Wind* and *Tide*, to the Port or place it is bound for: Surely in this caſe, nothing under Heaven can be imagined able to ſtop or countermand a Sinner amidſt all theſe Circumſtances promoting, and puſhing on his ſinfull Deſign. For all that can give Force and Fury to motion both from within, and from without, jointly meet to bear him forward in his preſent Attempt. He preſſes on like an *Horſe ruſhing into the Battle*, and all that ſhould withſtand him giving way before him. Now

Now under this deplorable Neceſſity of Ruine and Deſtruction does God's *preventing Grace* find every Sinner, when it *ſnatches him like a Brand out of the Fire*, and ſteps in between the Purpoſe, and the Commiſſion of his Sin. It finds him going on reſolutely in the *high* and *broad-way* to Perdition; which yet his perverted Reaſon tells him, is right, and his Will, *Pleaſant*. And therefore he has no Power of himſelf to leave, or turn out of it; but he is ruined jocundly and pleaſantly, and damned according to his Heart's deſire. And, can there be a more wretched and wofull Spectacle of Miſery, than a man in ſuch a condition? A man pleaſing and deſtroying himſelf together; A man (as it were) doing Violence to Damnation, and taking Hell by force. So that when the *Preventing* Goodneſs of God reaches out its Arm, and pulls him out of this fatal Path, it does by main force even wreſt him from himſelf, and ſave him as it were againſt his Will.

But neither is this his total Inability to recover or relieve himſelf the worſt of his condition; but, which is yet much worſe, it puts him into a ſtate of actual Hoſtility againſt, and Defiance of, that Almighty God, from whom alone, in this helpleſs, and forlorn condition, he is capable of receiving help. For ſurely, while a man is going on in a full purpoſe of Sin, he is trampling upon all Law, ſpitting in the face of Heaven, and provoking his Maker in the higheſt manner; ſo that none is, or can be ſo much concerned as God himſelf, to deſtroy and cut off ſuch an one, and to vindicate the honour of his great Name, by ſtriking him dead in his Rebellion. And this brings us to the

2*d*. Thing propoſed; which was to ſhew, What is the *Fountain* or *Impulſive Cauſe of this Prevention of Sin?* It is perfectly *Free Grace*. A man at beſt, upon all Principles of Divinity, and ſound Philoſophy, is uncapable of *meriting* any thing from God. But ſurely, while he is under the Dominion of Sin, and engaged

engaged in full Deſign and Purpoſe to commit it, it is not imaginable what can be found in him to oblige the Divine Grace in his behalf. For, he is in high and actual Rebellion againſt the only Giver of ſuch Grace. And therefore it muſt needs flow from a redundant, unaccountable Fulneſs of Compaſſion; ſhewing Mercy, *becauſe it will ſhew Mercy*; from a Compaſſion, which is, and muſt be its own Reaſon; and can have no Argument for its Exerciſe, but it ſelf. No man in the ſtrength of the *firſt Grace*, can *merit* the *ſecond*, (as ſome fondly ſpeak,) for Reaſon they doe not, unleſs a Beggar, by receiving one Alms, can be ſaid to merit another. It is not from what a man *is*, or what he has *done*; from any *Vertue* or *Excellency*, any preceding Worth or Deſert in him, that God is induced thus to interpoſe between Him and Ruin, and ſo ſtop him in his full career to Damnation. No, ſays God, in *Ezek.* 16. 6. *When I paſſed by, and ſaw thee polluted in thine own Blood, I ſaid unto thee, Live; yea, I ſaid unto thee, when*

thou waſt in thy Bloud, Live. The Spirit of God ſpeaks this great Truth to the Hearts of Men with Emphaſis and Repetition, knowing what an Aptneſs there is in them to oppoſe it. God ſees a man wallowing in his native Filth and Impurity, delivered over as an abſolute Captive to Sin, polluted with its Guilt, and enſlaved by its Power; and in this moſt loathſome Condition fixes upon him as an Object of his diſtinguiſhing Mercy. And to ſhew yet further, that the Actings of this Mercy, in the Work of *Prevention*, are entirely free; Doe we not ſometimes ſee, in perſons of equal guilt and demerit, and of equal progreſs, and advance in the ways of Sin; ſome of them maturely diverted, and took off, and others permitted to go on without check or controll, till they finiſh a ſinfull Courſe in final Perdition? So true is it, that, if things were caſt upon this Iſſue, *that God ſhould never prevent Sin, till ſomething in Man deſerved it*, the beſt of Men would fall into Sin, continue in Sin, and Sin on for ever.

And

And thus much for the *Second* Thing propoſed; which was to ſhew, *What was the Principle, or Fountain, from whence this Prevention of Sin does proceed.* Come we now to the

3*d.* Demonſtration, or Proof of the Greatneſs of this *preventing Mercy*, taken from the *Hazard a Man runs, if the Commiſſion of Sin be not prevented, whether ever it will come to be pardoned.*

In order to the clearing of which, I ſhall lay down theſe Two Conſiderations.

1. That if Sin be not thus prevented, it will certainly be committed; And the Reaſon is, becauſe, on the Sinner's part, there will be always a ſtrong inclination to Sin. So that, if other things concurr, and Providence cuts not off the opportunity, the Act of Sin muſt needs follow. For, an active Principle, ſeconded with the Opportunities of Action, will infallibly exert it ſelf.

2*ly.* The other Conſideration is, That in every Sin deliberately committed, there are (generally ſpeaking) many more

more Degrees of Probability, that That Sin will never come to be pardoned, than that it will.

And this ſhall be made appear upon theſe *Three* following Accounts.

1. Becauſe every Commiſſion of Sin introduces into the Soul a certain degree of Hardneſs, and an Aptneſs to continue in that Sin. It is a known maxim; That it is much more difficult to *throw out*, than *not to let in*. Every degree of Entrance, is a degree of Poſſeſſion. Sin taken into the Soul, is like a Liquor poured into a Veſſel; ſo much of it as it fills, it alſo ſeaſons. The Touch and Tincture go together. So that although the Body of the Liquor ſhould be poured out again, yet ſtill it leaves that Tang behind it, which makes the Veſſel fitter for that, than for any other. In like manner, every Act of Sin ſtrangely transforms, and works over the Soul to its own likeneſs. Sin in this being to the Soul, like fire to combuſtible matter; It aſſimilates, before it deſtroys it.

2*ly*. A

2*ly*. A ſecond Reaſon is; Becauſe every Commiſſion of Sin imprints upon the Soul a further diſpoſition, and proneneſs to Sin. As the ſecond, third, and fourth Degrees of Heat are more eaſily introduced, than the firſt. Every one is both a preparative, and a ſtep to the next. Drinking both quenches the preſent Thirſt, and provokes it for the future. When the Soul is beaten from its firſt Station, and the Mounds and Outworks of Vertue are once broken down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. In one ſingle Eating of the forbidden Fruit, when the Act is over, yet the Reliſh remains; and the Remembrance of the firſt Repaſt, is an eaſie Allurement to the Second. One Viſit is enough to begin an Acquaintance; and this Point is gained by it, that when the Viſitant comes again, he is no more a Stranger.

3*ly*. The third and grand Reaſon is; Becauſe the only thing, that can entitle the Sinner to Pardon, which is Repentance, is not in the Sinner's power. And

he

he who goes about the Work, will find it ſo. It is the Gift of God: And though God has certainly promiſed Forgiveneſs of Sin to every one who Repents, yet he has not promiſed to any one to give him Grace to Repent. This is the Sinner's hard Lot; that the ſame thing which makes him need Repentance, makes him alſo in danger of not obtaining it. For, it provokes and offends that *Holy Spirit*, which alone can beſtow his Grace. As the ſame Treaſon which puts a Traytor in need of his Prince's Mercy, is a great and a juſt Provocation to his Prince to deny it him.

Now, let theſe Three things be put together: *Firſt*, That every Commiſſion of Sin, in ſome degree, hardens the Soul in that Sin. *Secondly*, That every Commiſſion of Sin diſpoſes the Soul to proceed further in Sin: And *Thirdly*, That to repent, and turn from Sin (without which all Pardon is impoſſible) is not in the Sinner's power; And then, I ſuppoſe, there cannot but appear a greater likelihood, that a Sin once committed, will,

will, in the Iſſue, not be pardon'd, than that it will. To all which, add the Confirmation of general Experience, and the real Event of Things, That where one Man ever comes to Repent, an hundred, I might ſay a thouſand at leaſt, end their days in final Impenitence.

All which conſidered, ſurely there cannot need a more pregnant Argument of the Greatneſs of this *Preventing Mercy*; if it did no more for a man than this; That his grand, immortal Concern, more valuable to him than ten thouſand Worlds, is not *thrown* upon a Critical Point; that he is not *brought* to his laſt Stake; that he is reſcued from the firſt Deſcents into Hell, and the high Probabilities of Damnation.

For, whatſoever the Iſſue proves, it is certainly a miſerable thing to be forced to caſt Lots for one's Life; yet in every Sin a man does the ſame for Eternity. And therefore, let the boldeſt Sinner take this one Conſideration along with him, when he is going to Sin, That whether the Sin he is about to act ever comes to be pardoned or no; yet, as ſoon as it is acted,

acted, it quite turns the Balance, puts his Salvation upon the venture, leaves him but one Caſt for all; and, which is yet much more dreadfull, makes it ten to one odds againſt him.

But, let us now alter the ſtate of the matter ſo, as to leave no doubt in the caſe: But ſuppoſe, that the Sin, which upon non-prevention comes to be committed, comes alſo to be repented of, and conſequently to be pardoned. Yet, in the

Fourth and *Laſt* place, The Greatneſs of this *Preventing-Mercy* is eminently proved from thoſe Advantages accruing to the Soul, from the *Prevention* of Sin, above what can be had from the bare *Pardon* of it. And that, in theſe Two great Reſpects.

1. Of the *Clearneſs* of a man's Condition.

2. Of the *Satisfaction* of his Mind. And,

Firſt, For the *Clearneſs* of his Condition. If innocence be preferible to Repentance; and to be *clean*, be more deſirable,

deſirable, than to be *cleanſed*; then ſurely *Prevention* of Sin ought to have the Precedence of its *Pardon*. For, ſo much of Prevention, ſo much of Innocence. There are indeed various Degrees of it; and God in his Infinite Wiſdom does not deal forth the ſame meaſure of his *Preventing Grace* to All. Sometimes he may ſuffer the Soul but juſt to begin the ſinfull production, in reflecting upon a Sin ſuggeſted by the Imagination, with ſome Complacency, and Delight; which, in the Apoſtle's phraſe, is *to conceive Sin*; and then, in theſe early, imperfect Beginnings, God perhaps may preſently daſh, and extinguiſh it. Or, poſſibly he may permit the Sinfull *Conception* to receive Life and Form, by paſſing into a purpoſe of committing it; and then he may make it prove Abortive, by ſtifling it, before ever it comes to the Birth. Or, perhaps, God may think fit, to let it come *even to the Birth* by ſome ſtrong Endeavours to commit it; and yet then, deny it *ſtrength to bring forth*; ſo that it never comes into Actual Commiſſion. Or, laſtly,

laſtly, God may ſuffer it to be Born, and ſee the World, by permitting the Endeavour of Sin to paſs into the Commiſſion of it. And this is the laſt fatal ſtep, but one; which is by frequent Repetition of the ſinfull Act, to continue and perſiſt in it, till at length it ſettles into a fixed, confirmed Habit of Sin; which being properly that, which the Apoſtle calls the *finiſhing of Sin*, ends certainly in *Death*; Death, not only as to Merit, but alſo as to Actual Infliction.

Now peradventure in this whole progreſs, *Preventing Grace* may ſometimes come in to the poor Sinner's help, but *at the laſt hour of the Day*; and having ſuffered him to run all the former risk and maze of Sin, and to deſcend ſo many ſteps downwards to the black Regions of Death: As firſt, from the bare Thought and Imagination of Sin, to look upon it with ſome Beginnings of Appetite, and Delight; from thence to purpoſe and intend it; and from intending, to endeavour it; and from endeavouring, actually to commit it;

and

and having committed it, perhaps for ſome time to continue in it. And then (I ſay) after all this, God may turn the fatal Stream, and by a mighty Grace interrupt its Courſe, and keep it from paſſing into a ſettled Habit, and ſo hinder the abſolute Completion of Sin in final Obduracy.

Certain it is, that whereſoever it pleaſes God to ſtop the Sinner on this ſide Hell, how far ſoever he has been advanced in his way towards it, it is a vaſt, ineffable Mercy; a Mercy as great as Life from the Dead, and Salvation to a man tottering with Horror upon the very Edge and Brink of Deſtruction. But if, more than all this, God ſhall be pleaſed by an Early Grace to prevent Sin ſo ſoon, as to keep the Soul in the Virginity of its firſt Innocence, not tainted with the Deſires, and much leſs deflowered with the formed Purpoſe of any thing vile and ſinfull; What an Infinite Goodneſs is this? It is not a *Converting*, but a *Crowning* Grace; ſuch an one as irradiates, and puts a Circle of Glory about

the Head of him, upon whom it deſcends; It is the *Holy Ghoſt* coming down upon him *in the form of a Dove*; and ſetting him Triumphant above the Neceſſity of Tears and Sorrow, Mourning and Repentance, the ſad After-games of a loſt Innocence. And this brings in the Conſideration of that other great Advantage accruing to the Soul from the *Prevention of Sin*, above what can be had from the bare Pardon of it; Namely,

2. *The Satisfaction of a man's Mind.* There is that true Joy, that ſolid and ſubſtantial Comfort, conveyed to the Heart by *Preventing-Grace*; which *Pardoning-Grace*, at the beſt, very ſeldom, and, for the moſt part, never gives. For, ſince all Joy paſſes into the Heart through the Underſtanding, the Object of it muſt be known by one, before it can affect the other. Now, when Grace keeps a Man ſo within his Bounds, that Sin is *prevented*, he certainly knows it to be ſo; and ſo rejoyces upon the firm, infallible Ground of Senſe and Aſſurance.

But,

But, on the other ſide, though Grace may have reverſed the Condemning Sentence, and ſealed the Sinner's Pardon before God, yet it may have left no Tranſcript of that Pardon in the Sinner's Breaſt. The *Hand-writing* againſt him may be Cancelled in the *Court of Heaven*, and yet the Enditement run on in the *Court of Conſcience*. So that a Man my be *ſafe* as to his Condition, but in the mean time *dark* and *doubtfull* as to his Apprehenſions; *Secure* in his Pardon, but *miſerable* in the Ignorance of it; and ſo paſſing all his days in the diſconſolate, uneaſie Viciſſitudes of Hopes and Fears, at length go out of the World, not knowing whither he goes. And, what is this but a black Cloud drawn over all a man's Comforts? A Cloud, which though it cannot hinder the ſupporting *Influence* of Heaven, yet will be ſure to intercept the refreſhing *Light* of it. The *Pardoned Perſon* muſt not think to ſtand upon the ſame vantage Ground with the *Innocent*. It is enough that they are both equally *ſafe*; but it can-

not be thought, that without a rare Privilege, both can be equally *chearfull*. And, thus much for the advantagious Effects of *Preventing*, above thoſe of *Pardoning* Grace; which was the Fourth and Laſt Argument brought for the Proof of the Propoſition. Paſs we now to the next General Thing propoſed for the Proſecution of it; Namely,

2. Its *Application*. Which, from the foregoing Diſcourſe, may afford us ſeveral uſefull Deductions; but chiefly by way of *Information*, in theſe Three following Particulars. As,

Firſt, This may inform and convince us how vaſtly greater a pleaſure is conſequent upon the *Forbearance* of Sin, than can poſſibly accompany the *Commiſſion* of it; And, how much higher a Satisfaction is to be found from a *conquered*, than from a *conquering* Paſſion. For the proof of which, we need look no further than the great Example here before us. Revenge is certainly the moſt luſcious Morſel that the Devil can put into the Sinner's mouth. But, doe we think,

think, that *David* could have found half that pleaſure in the Execution of his Revenge, that he expreſſes here upon the Diſappointment of it? Poſſibly it might have pleaſed him in the preſent heat and hurry of his Rage, but muſt have diſpleaſed him infinitely more in the cool, ſedate Reflections of his Mind. For, Sin can pleaſe no longer, than for that pitifull Space of Time while it is committing; and ſurely the preſent pleaſure of a ſinfull Act, is a poor Countervail for the bitterneſs of the Review, which begins where the Action ends, and laſts for ever. There is no ill thing which a man does in his Paſſion, but his Memory will be revenged on him for it afterwards.

All Pleaſure ſpringing from a gratified Paſſion, (as moſt of the Pleaſure of Sin does,) muſt needs determine with that Paſſion. 'Tis ſhort, violent, and fallacious; and, as ſoon as the Imagination is diſabuſed, will certainly be at an end. And therefore *Des Cartes* preſcribes excellently well for the Regulation of the Paſſions; *viz.* That a Man ſhould fix

and fore-arm his Mind with this ſettled Perſwaſion, that, during that Commotion of his Blood and Spirits, in which Paſſion properly conſiſts, whatſoever is offered to his Imagination in favour of it, tends only to deceive his Reaſon. It is indeed a real Trapan upon it; feeding it with Colours, and Appearances, inſtead of Arguments; and driving the very ſame Bargain, which *Jacob* did with *Eſau*, *A Meſs of Pottage* for a *Birth-right*, a preſent Repaſt for a Perpetuity.

Secondly, We have here a ſure unfailing *Criterion*, by which every Man may diſcover, and find out the gracious or ungracious Diſpoſition of his own Heart. The Temper of every Man is to be judged of from the Thing he moſt eſteems; and the Object of his *Eſteem*, may be meaſured by the prime Object of his *Thanks*. What is it, that opens thy Mouth in Praiſes, that fills thy Heart, and lifts up thy Hands in gratefull Acknowledgments to thy great Creator, and Preſerver? Is it, that thy Bags, and thy Barns are full, that thou haſt eſcaped

this

this Sickneſs, or that Danger? Alas, God may have done all this for thee in Anger! All this fair Sun-ſhine may have been only to harden thee in thy Sins. He may have given thee Riches and Honour, Health and Power with a Curſe; and, if ſo, it will be found but a poor Comfort, to have had never ſo great a ſhare of God's *Bounty*, without his *Bleſſing*.

But, has he at any time kept thee from thy Sin; ſtopt thee in the proſecution of thy Luſt? defeated the malicious Arts and Stratagems of thy mortal Enemy the Tempter? And, does not the ſenſe of this move and affect thy Heart more than all the former Inſtances of Temporal Proſperity, which are but (as it were) the promiſcuous Scatterings of his Common Providence, while theſe are the diſtinguiſhing Kindneſſes of his ſpecial Grace?

A truly pious Mind has certainly another kind of reliſh and taſte of theſe things; and, if it receives a Temporal Bleſſing with Gratitude, it receives a Spi-

ritual one with Ecſtaſie and Tranſport. *David*, an heroick Inſtance of ſuch a Temper, over-looks the rich and ſeaſonable Preſent of *Abigail*, though preſſed with Hunger and Travel; but her Advice, which diſarmed his Rage, and calmed his Revenge, draws forth thoſe high and affectionate Gratulations from him: *Bleſſed be thy advice, and bleſſed be thou, who haſt kept me this day from ſhedding Bloud, and avenging my ſelf with my own hand.* Theſe were his joyfull and glorious Trophies; not that he Triumphed over his Enemy, but that he Inſulted over his Revenge; that he eſcaped from himſelf, and was delivered from his own Fury. And whoſoever has any thing of *David's* Piety, will be perpetually plying the Throne of Grace with ſuch-like Acknowledgments; As, "*Bleſſed* be that Providence, which de- "livered me from ſuch a lewd Compa- "ny, and ſuch a vicious Acquaintance, "which was the Bane of ſuch, and ſuch "a perſon. And, *Bleſſed be that God* "who caſt rubs, and ſtops, and hin- "drances

"drances in my way, when I was at-
"tempting the Commiſſion of ſuch or
"ſuch a Sin; who took me out of ſuch
"a Courſe of Life, ſuch a Place, or
"ſuch an Imployment which was a con-
"tinual Snare and Temptation to me.
"And, *Bleſſed be ſuch a Preacher*, and
"ſuch a Friend, whom God made uſe of
"to ſpeak a Word in ſeaſon to my wick-
"ed Heart, and ſo turned me out of the
"Paths of Death and Deſtruction, and
"ſaved me in ſpight of the World, the
"Devil, and my ſelf.

Theſe are ſuch things as a Man ſhall remember with Joy upon his Death-bed; ſuch as ſhall chear and warm his Heart even in that laſt and bitter Agony, when many from the very bottom of their Souls ſhall wiſh, that they had never been Rich, or Great, or Powerfull; and reflect with Anguiſh and Remorſe upon thoſe ſplendid Occaſions of Sin, which ſerved them for little, but to heighten their Guilt, and at beſt to inflame their Accounts, at that great Tribunal which they are going to appear before.

3. In

3. In the *Third* and *Laſt* place. We learn from hence, the great Reaſonableneſs of, not only a *contented*, but alſo a *thankfull* Acquieſcence in any Condition, and under the croſſeſt and ſevereſt paſſages of Providence, which can poſſibly befall us: Since there is none of all theſe but may be the Inſtruments of *Preventing-Grace* in the hands of a mercifull God, to keep us from thoſe Courſes which would otherwiſe aſſuredly end in our confuſion. This is moſt certain, that there is no Enjoyment which the Nature of Man is either deſirous or capable of, but may be to him a direct inducement to Sin, and conſequently is big with Miſchief, and carries Death in the Bowels of it. But to make the Aſſertion more particular, and thereby more convincing, let us take an Account of it with reference to the three greateſt and deſervedly moſt valued Enjoyments of this Life.

1. *Health*, 2ly. *Reputation*; And, 3ly. *Wealth*.

Firſt.

Firſt. And firſt for *Health*. Has God made a Breach upon that? Perhaps he is building up thy Soul upon the Ruins of thy Body. Has he bereaved thee of the uſe and vigour of thy Limbs? Poſſibly he ſaw that otherwiſe they would have been the Inſtruments of thy Luſts, and the active Miniſters of thy Debaucheries. Perhaps thy languiſhing upon thy Bed has kept thee from rotting in a Gaol, or in a worſe place. God ſaw it neceſſary by ſuch Mortifications to quench the Boilings of a furious, overflowing Appetite, and the boundleſs Rage of an inſatiable Intemperance; to make the Weakneſs of the *Fleſh*, the Phyſick and Reſtaurative of the *Spirit*; And, in a word, rather to ſave thee, diſeaſed, ſickly, and deformed, than to let Strength, Health and Beauty, drive thee head-long (as they have done many thouſands) into Eternal Deſtruction.

Secondly, Has God in his Providence thought fit to drop a Blot upon thy Name, and to Blaſt thy Reputation? He ſaw perhaps that the Breath of popu-

lar

lar Air was grown Infectious, and would have derived a Contagion upon thy better part. Pride and Vain-glory had mounted thee too high, and therefore it was neceſſary for Mercy to take thee down, to prevent a greater fall. *A good Name is*, indeed, *better than Life*; but a ſound Mind is better than both. Praiſe and Applauſe had ſwell'd thee to a proportion ready to burſt; it had vitiated all thy ſpiritual Appetites, and brought thee to feed upon the Air, and to ſurfeit upon the Wind, and, in a word, to ſtarve thy Soul, only to pamper thy Imagination.

And now, if God makes uſe of ſome poynant Diſgrace to prick this enormous Bladder, and to let out the poyſonous Vapour, is not the Mercy greater than the Severity of the Cure? *Cover them with ſhame* (ſays the *Pſalmiſt*) that they *may ſeek thy Name.* Fame and Glory tranſports a Man out of himſelf; and, like a violent Wind, though it may bear him up for a while, yet it will be ſure to let him fall at laſt. It makes the Mind

Mind looſe, and gariſh, ſcatters the Spirits, and leaves a kind of Diſſolution upon all the Faculties. Whereas *ſhame* on the contrary (as all Grief does) naturally contracts and unites, and thereby fortifies the Spirits, fixes the Ramblings of Fancy, and ſo reduces and gathers the Man into himſelf. This is the ſoveraign Effect of a bitter Potion, adminiſtred by a Wiſe and Mercifull Hand: And what hurt can there be in all the Slanders, Obloquies and Diſgraces of this World, if they are but the Arts and Methods of Providence to ſhame us into the *Glories* of the next. But then,

Thirdly and *Laſtly*, Has God thought fit to caſt thy lot amongſt the Poor of this World, and that either by denying thee any ſhare of the Plenties of this Life, (which is ſomething grievous;) or by taking them away, which is much more ſo? Yet ſtill all this may be but the Effect of *Preventing* Mercy. For ſo much miſchief as Riches have done, and may doe to the Souls of Men, ſo much Mercy may there be in taking them away.

way. For, does not the Wiſeſt of Men, next our Saviour, tell us of *Riches kept to the hurt of the owners* of them? *Eccleſ.* 5. 13. And, does not our Saviour himſelf ſpeak of the intolerable Difficulty, which they cauſe in men's paſſage to Heaven? Doe they not make the *Narrow way* much narrower? and contract *the Gate which leads to life* to the ſtreightneſs of a *Needle's Eye?*

And now, if God will fit thee for this paſſage, by taking off thy Load, and emptying thy Bags, and ſo ſute the Narrowneſs of thy Fortune, to the *Narrowneſs of the way* thou art to paſs, is there any thing but Mercy in all this? Nay, are not the *Riches* of his Mercy conſpicuous in the *Poverty* of thy Condition?

Thou who repineſt at the Plenty and Splendour of thy Neighbour, at the Greatneſs of his Incomes, and the Magnificence of his Retinue; Conſider what are frequently the diſmal, wretched Conſequences of all this, and thou wilt have little cauſe to Envy this gawdy Great One,

One, or to wiſh thy ſelf in his room.

For, doe we not often hear of this or that young Heir newly come to his Father's vaſt Eſtate? An happy Man, no doubt! But, does not the Town preſently ring of his Debaucheries, his Blaſphemies and his Murders? Are not his Riches and his Lewdneſſes talkt of together? and the Odiouſneſs of one, heightned and ſet off by the Greatneſs of the other? Are not his Oaths, his Riots, and other Villainies, reckoned by as *many thouſands* as his Eſtate?

Now conſider, had this grand Debauchee, this gliſtering Monſter, been born to thy Poverty and mean Circumſtances, he could not have contracted ſuch a clamorous Guilt, he could not have been ſo bad: Nor, perhaps, had thy Birth enſtated thee in the ſame Wealth and Greatneſs, wouldſt thou have been at all better.

This God fore-ſaw, and knew, in the ordering both of his and thy Condition: And which of the Two now, can we think,

think, is the greater Debtor to his *Preventing* Mercy? Lordly Sins require Lordly Eſtates to ſupport them: And where Providence denies the latter, it cuts off all Temptation to the former.

And thus I have ſhown by particular Inſtances, what Cauſe men have to acquieſce in, and ſubmit to the harſheſt Diſpenſations that Providence can meaſure out to them in this Life; and with what Satisfaction, or rather Gratitude, that ought to be *endured*, by which the greateſt of Miſchiefs is *prevented*. The great Phyſician of Souls, ſometimes, cannot Cure without Cutting us. Sin has feſtred inwardly, and he muſt launce the Impoſtem, to let out Death with the Suppuration. He who ties a Mad-man's Hands, or takes away his Sword, loves his Perſon, while he diſarms his Frenzy. And whether by Health or Sickneſs, Honour or Diſgrace, Wealth or Poverty, Life or Death, Mercy is ſtill contriving, acting, and carrying on the Spiritual Good

Good of all thoſe who *love God*, and are *loved by Him.*

To whom therefore be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE *Nature and Meaſures of Conſcience*: IN TWO SERMONS

On 1 *JOHN* III. 21.

PREACHED

Before the UNIVERSITY at *Chriſt-Church*, Oxon.

The *Firſt* Preached on the 1ſt. of *Nov.* 1691.

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1 JOHN III. 21.

Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, we have Confidence towards God.

AS nothing can be of more moment; ſo few things, *doubtleſs*, are of more difficulty, than for Men to be

rationally ſatisfied about the eſtate of their Souls, with reference to God, and the great Concerns of Eternity. In their Judgment about which, if they err finally, it is like a man's miſſing his Caſt when he throws *Dice* for *his Life*; His Being, his Happineſs, and all that he does, or can enjoy in the World, is involved in the Error of one Throw. And therefore it may very well deſerve our beſt Skill and Care, to enquire into thoſe Rules, by which we may guide our *Judgment* in ſo weighty an Affair, both with ſafety and ſucceſs. And this, I think, cannot be better done, than by ſeparating the *falſe* and *fallacious*, from the *true* and *certain*. For, if the *Rule* we judge by, be *uncertain*, it is odds, but we ſhall judge wrong; and, if we ſhould judge right; yet it is not properly *Skill*, but *Chance*; not a true Judgment, but a lucky Hit: Which certainly, the Eternal Intereſts of an Immortal Soul, are of much too high a Value to be left at the Mercy of.

Firſt of all then: He who would paſs ſuch a Judgment *upon his Condition*, as ſhall be ratified in Heaven, and confirmed at that great Tribunal, from which there lies no Appeal, will find himſelf wofully deceived, if he judges of his *ſpiritual eſtate* by any of theſe Four following Meaſures: As,

1. The *general eſteem of the World concerning him.* He, who owes his *Piety* to Fame and Hear-ſay, *and the Evidences of his Salvation* to popular Voice and Opinion, builds his Houſe not only *upon the Sand*, but (which is worſe) upon the *Wind*; and writes the *Deeds*, by which he holds his Eſtate, upon the face of a *River*. He makes a Bodily *Eye* the Judge of Things impoſſible to be *ſeen*; and Humor and Ignorance (which the generality of Men both think and ſpeak by) the *great Proofs* of his Juſtification. But, ſurely, no man has the *Eſtate of his Soul* drawn upon *his Face*, nor the Decree of his *Election* wrote upon *his Forehead*. He who would know a man throughly, muſt follow him into the

Cloſet of his Heart; the Door of which is kept ſhut to all the World beſides, and the Inſpection of which is only the Prerogative of Omniſcience.

The favourable opinion, and good word of Men (to *ſome perſons* eſpecially) comes oftentimes at a very eaſie rate; and, by a few demure *Looks*, and affected *Whines*, ſet off with ſome odd, devotional Poſtures and Grimaces, and ſuch other little Arts of Diſſimulation, cunning Men will doe Wonders, and Commence preſently Heroes for Sanctity, Self-denial, and ſincerity, while within perhaps they are as *Proud as Lucifer*, *as Covetous as Demas*, *as falſe as Judas*; and, in the whole Courſe of their Converſation, *Act*, and *are Acted* not by Devotion, but Deſign.

So that, for ought I ſee, though the *Moſaical* part of *Judaiſm* be aboliſhed amongſt Chriſtians, the *Phariſaical* part of it never will. A grave, ſtanch, skillfully *managed Face*, ſet upon a graſping, aſpiring Mind, having got many a ſly Formaliſt the Reputation of a *Primitive*

and

and ſevere Piety (forſooth) and made many ſuch Mountebanks paſs admired, even for *Saints upon Earth* (as the word is) who are like to be ſo no-where elſe.

But a man, who had never ſeen the ſtately outſide of a *Tomb*, or *painted Sepulchre* before, may very well be excuſed, if he takes it rather for the *Repoſitory of ſome rich Treaſure*, than of a *noyſome Corps*; but ſhould he but once open and rake into it, though he could not *ſee*, he would quickly *ſmell out*, his miſtake. The greateſt part of the World is nothing but *Appearance*, nothing but *Shew* and *Surface*; and many make it their Buſineſs, their Study and Concern, that it ſhould be ſo; who having for many years together deceived all about them, are at laſt willing to deceive themſelves too; and, by a long, immemorial Practice, and (as it were) *Preſcription* of an aged, thorough-paced *Hypocriſie*, come at length to believe that for a *Reality*, which, at the firſt Practice of it, they themſelves knew to be a Cheat. But,

if Men love to be deceived, and fooled about ſo great an Intereſt as that of their *ſpiritual Eſtate*, it muſt be confeſſed that they cannot take a ſurer, and more effectual Courſe to be ſo, than by taking their Neighbour's word for that, which can be known to them only from their *own Hearts*. For, certainly, it is not more abſurd to undertake to tell the *Name* of an *unknown perſon by his looks*, than to Vouch a man's *Saintſhip* from the *vogue* of the World, founded upon his *External Behaviour*.

2*ly*. The Judgment of any *Caſuiſt* or *Learned Divine*, concerning the *Eſtate of a man's Soul*, is not ſufficient to give him Confidence towards God. And the Reaſon is, becauſe no Learning whatſoever can give a man the Knowledge of another's *Heart*. Beſides, that it is more than poſſible that the moſt profound, and experienced *Caſuiſt* in the World, may miſtake in his Judgment of a man's ſpiritual Condition; and, if he does judge right, yet the Man cannot be ſure that he will declare that Judgment ſincerely

cerely and impartially, (the *greateſt Clerks* being not always the *honeſteſt*, any more than the *wiſeſt Men*,) but may purpoſely ſooth a man up for Hope or Fear, or the Service of ſome ſiniſter Intereſt; and ſo ſhew him the face of a foul Soul in a flattering Glaſs: Conſidering how much the raiſing in ſome Men a falſe Hope of *another* World, may, with others, ſerve a real Intereſt in *this*.

There is a Generation of Men, who have framed their Caſuiſtical Divinity to a perfect Compliance with all the corrupt Affections of Man's Nature; and by that new-invented Engine of the *Doctrine of Probability*, will undertake to warrant, and quiet the Sinner's Conſcience in the Commiſſion of any Sin whatſoever, provided there be but the *Opinion of one Learned Man* to vouch it. For this, they ſay, is a ſufficient Ground for the Conſcience of any unlearned Perſon to rely, and to act upon. So that if but *one Doctor* aſſerts, that I may lawfully kill a Man, to prevent a Box on the Ear,

Ear, or a Calumny, by which he would otherwiſe aſperſe my good Name, I may, with a good Conſcience, doe it; Nay, I may ſafely reſt upon this one Caſuiſt's Judgment, though thouſands, as learned as himſelf; yea, and the expreſs *Law of God* beſides, affirm the quite contrary. But theſe Spiritual Engineers know well enough, how to deal with any Commandment, either by Taking, or Expounding it, *away*, at their pleaſure.

Such an Aſcendant have theſe Romiſh Caſuiſts over *Scripture*, *Reaſon*, and *Morality*; much like what is ſaid of the ſtupid, modern *Jews*, that they have ſubdued their *Senſe* and *Reaſon* to ſuch a ſottiſh Servitude to their *Rabbies*, as to hold, That in caſe two *Rabbies* ſhould happen to contradict one another, they were yet bound to believe the Contradictory Aſſertions of both to be equally certain, and equally the Word of God: Such an Iron-digeſting Faith have they, and ſuch pity it is, that there ſhould be no ſuch thing in *Judaiſm* as *Tranſubſtantiation* to imploy it upon. But,

But, as for theſe Caſuiſts, whom I have been ſpeaking of; if the Judgment of *one Doctor* may authorize the Practice of any Action, I believe, it will *be hard to find* any ſort or degree of Villainy, which the Corruption of Man's Nature is capable of committing, which ſhall not meet with a *Defence*. And of this, I could give you ſuch an Inſtance from ſomething wrote by a certain Prelate of theirs, Cardinal and Arch-Biſhop of *Beneventum*, as were enough, not only to aſtoniſh all Pious Ears, but almoſt to unconſecrate the very Church I ſpeak in.

But the Truth is, the Way, by which theſe *Romiſh Caſuiſts* ſpeak *Peace* to the Conſciences of Men, is either by teaching them, that many Actions, *are not Sins*, which yet really are ſo; or, by ſuggeſting ſomething to them, which ſhall ſatisfie their Minds, notwithſtanding a known, actual, avowed Continuance in their Sins: Such as are their *Pardons* and *Indulgences*, and giving Men a ſhare in the *Saints Merits*, out of the Common

Common Bank and Treaſury of the Church, which the *Pope* has the ſole cuſtody and diſpoſal of, and is never kept *ſhut* to ſuch as come with an *open hand*. So that, according to theſe *New Evangeliſts*, well may we pronounce, *Bleſſed are the Rich, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* But God deliver the World from ſuch *Guides*, or rather ſuch *Huckſters* of Souls, the very ſhame of Religion, and the ſhameleſs Subverters of Morality. And, it is really matter both of Wonder and Indignation, that ſuch *Impoſtors* ſhould at all concern themſelves about Rules or Directions of Conſcience, who ſeem to have no Conſciences to apply them to.

3*ly*, The *Abſolution* pronounced by a Prieſt, whether *Papiſt* or *Proteſtant*, is not a certain, infallible Ground, to give the perſon, ſo abſolved, confidence towards God: And the Reaſon is, Becauſe, if *Abſolution*, as ſuch, could of it ſelf ſecure a Man, as to the Eſtate of his Soul, then it would follow, That every perſon, ſo abſolved, ſhould, by vertue thereof,

thereof, be, *ipſo facto*, put into ſuch a Condition of ſafety, which is not imaginable.

For the Abſolution pronounced muſt be either *Conditional*, as running upon the Conditions of *Faith* and *Repentance*; and *then*, if thoſe Conditions are not found in the perſon ſo abſolved, it is but a Seal to a Blank, and ſo a meer Nullity to him. Or, the *Abſolution* muſt be pronounced in Terms *abſolute*, and *unconditional*: And if ſo, then the ſaid *Abſolution* becomes valid and effectual, either by vertue of the *State* of the Perſon, to whom it was pronounced, as being a *true Penitent*, or by vertue of the *Opus Operatum*, or bare Action it ſelf of the Prieſt Abſolving him. If it receives its *Validity* from the former; then it is clear, That although it runs in Forms *Abſolute*, yet it is indeed *Conditional*, as depending upon the *Qualification* of the Perſon, to whom it is pronounced; Who therefore owes the Remiſſion of his Sins, not properly to the *Prieſt's Abſolution*, but to his own *Repentance*,

pentance, which made that Abſolution effectual, and would undoubtedly have ſaved him, though the Prieſt had never Abſolved him.

But if it be *aſſerted*, that the *very Action* of the *Prieſt abſolving him* has of it ſelf this Vertue; then we muſt grant alſo, that it is in the Prieſt's power to ſave a Man, who never repented, nor did one good *Work* in all his life; for-as-much as it is in his Power to perform this *Action* upon him in full Form, and with full Intention to *Abſolve him*. But the horrible Abſurdity, Blaſphemy, and Impiety of this Aſſertion, ſufficiently proclaims its Falſity without any further Confutation.

In a word, if a man be a *Penitent*, his *Repentance* ſtamps his *Abſolution* effectual. If not, let the Prieſt repeat the ſame *Abſolution* to him Ten thouſand times; yet for all his being *abſolved* in this *World*, God will condemn him in the other. And conſequently, he who places his Salvation upon this Ground, will find himſelf like an impriſoned and condemned

demned Malefactor, who in the Night dreams, that he is releaſed, but in the Morning finds himſelf led to the *Gallows*.

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, No Advantages *from External Church-Membership, or Profeſſion of the true Religion*, can of themſelves give a Man Confidence towards God. And yet perhaps, there is hardly any one Thing in the World, which Men, in all Ages, have, generally, more cheated themſelves with. The Jews were an Eminent Inſtance of this. Who, becauſe they were the *Sons of Abraham*, as it is readily acknowledged by our Saviour, *John* 8. 37. *And becauſe they were entruſted with the Oracles of God*, Rom. 3. 2. *Together with the Covenants, and the Promiſes*, *Rom.* 9. 4. That is, in other Words, Becauſe they were the *True Church*, and Profeſſors of the *True Religion* (while all the World, about them, lay wallowing in *Ignorance*, *Heatheniſm*, and *Idolatry*) they concluded from hence, that God was ſo fond of them, that notwithſtanding all their Villainies, and Immoralities, they were

were ſtill the Darlings of Heaven, and the only Heirs Apparent of Salvation. They thought (it ſeems) God and themſelves linked together in ſo *faſt*, but withall ſo *ſtrange* a Covenant, that although they never performed their part of it, God was yet bound to make good every Tittle of his.

And this made *John* the *Baptiſt*, ſet himſelf with ſo much Acrimony, and Indignation, to baffle this Senſeleſs, Arrogant Conceit of theirs, which made them huff at the Doctrine of Repentance, as a Thing below them, and not at all belonging to them; In *Matth.* 3. v. 9. *Think not* (ſays he) *to ſay within your ſelves, we have Abraham to our Father.* This he knew lay deep in their *Hearts*, and was ſtill in their *Mouths*, and kept them Inſolent, and Impenitent under Sins of the higheſt and moſt clamorous Guilt; *though* our Saviour himſelf alſo, not long after this, aſſured them that they were of a very different Stock, and Parentage from that, which they boaſted of; and that whoſoever was their *Father* upon the

the *Natural* Account, the Devil was certainly ſo upon a *Moral.*

In like manner, how vainly do the Romaniſts pride, and value themſelves upon the Name of *Catholicks*, of the *Catholick Religion*, and of the *Catholick Church?* though a Title no more applicable to the *Church of Rome*, than a Man's *Finger*, when it is ſwelled and putrefied, can be called his *whole Body*: a Church which allows *Salvation* to none without it, nor awards *Damnation* to almoſt any within it. And therefore, as the former Empty *Plea* ſerved the ſottiſh *Jews*; ſo, no wonder, if this equally ſerves theſe, to put them into a *Fools Paradiſe*, by feeding their Hopes, without changing their Lives; and, as an Excellent Expedient, firſt to aſſure them of Heaven, and then to bring them eaſily to it; and ſo in a word, to ſave both *their Souls*, and *their Sins* too.

And to ſhew, how the ſame Cheat runs through all Profeſſions, though not in the ſame Dreſs; none are more powerfully, and groſly under it, than another

Sort of Men, who, on the contrary, place *their whole Acceptance with God*, and indeed, their whole *Religion*, upon a *mighty Zeal* (or rather out-cry) againſt *Popery, and Superſtition*; verbally, indeed, uttered *againſt the Church of Rome*, but really meant againſt the *Church of England*. To which Sort of Perſons I ſhall ſay no more but this, (and that in the Spirit of Truth and Meekneſs) *namely*; That Zeal and Noiſe *againſt Popery*, and real Services *for it*, are no ſuch inconſiſtent Things, as ſome may imagine; indeed no more than *Invectives againſt Papiſt, and ſolemn Addreſſes of Thanks to them*, for that very Thing, by which they would have brought in Popery upon us. And if thoſe of the Separation do not yet know ſo much, (thanks to them for it) we of the Church of *England* do; and ſo may they themſelves too, in due time. I ſpeak not this by way of *Sarcaſm*, to reproach them, (I leave that to their own Conſciences, which will do it more effectually) but by way of *Charity* to warn them: For let them be aſſured, that this whole

whole Scene and Practice of theirs, is as really *Superſtition*, and as falſe a Bottom to reſt their Souls upon, as either *the Jews alledging Abraham for their Father*, while the *Devil* claimed them for his *Children*; or the Papiſts relying upon *their Indulgences*, their *Saints Merits*, and *Supererogations*, and ſuch other Fopperies, as can never *ſettle*, nor indeed ſo much as *reach*, the Conſcience; and much leſs recommend it *to that Judge*, who is not to be flamm'd off with Words and Phraſes, and *Names*, though taken out of the Scripture it ſelf.

Nay, and I ſhall proceed yet further. It is not a Man's being of the *Church of England* it ſelf (though undoubtedly the pureſt and beſt reformed Church in the World; indeed ſo well reformed, that it will be found a much eaſier Work *to alter*, than to *better* its Conſtitution;) I ſay, it is not a Man's being even of this Excellent Church, which can of it ſelf clear Accounts between God and his Conſcience. Since bare Communion with a good Church, can never alone *make a*

good Man: For, if it could, I am ſure we ſhould have no bad ones in ours; and much leſs ſuch as would betray it.

So that we ſee here, that it is but too manifeſt, that Men of all Churches, Sects and Perſwaſions, are *ſtrangely* apt to flatter, and deceive themſelves with what they *believe*, and what they *profeſs*; and if we throughly conſider the Matter, we ſhall find the Fallacy to lie in this. That thoſe Religious Inſtitutions, which God deſigned only for *Means*, *Helps*, and *Advantages*, to promote and further Men in the Practice of Holineſs, they look upon rather, as a *Privilege* to ſerve them *inſtead of it*, and really to commute *for it*. This is the very Caſe, and a fatal Self-impoſture it is certainly, and ſuch an one as defeats the Deſign, and *deſtroys* the Force of all Religion.

And thus, I have ſhewn *four* ſeveral, uncertain, and deceitfull *Rules*, which Men are prone to judge of their *Spiritual Eſtate* by.

But

But now, have we any better or more certain, to ſubſtitute, and recommend in the Room of them? Why, yes; if we believe the Apoſtle, a Man's own *Heart* or *Conſcience* is that, which, above all other Things, is able to give him *Confidence towards God.* And the Reaſon is, becauſe the Heart knows that by it ſelf, which, nothing in the World beſides, can give it any *knowledge* of; and without the Knowledge of which, it can have no Foundation to build any true Confidence upon. *Conſcience*, under God, is the only competent Judge of what the Soul has done, and what it has not done; what Guilt it has contracted, and what it has not; as it is in 1 *Corinth.* 2. 11. *What Man knoweth the Things of a Man, ſave the Spirit of Man which is in him?* Conſcience is its own Counſellor, the ſole Maſter of its own Secrets: And it is the Privilege of our Nature, that every Man ſhould keep the Key of his own Breaſt.

Now for the further Proſecution of the Words, I ſhall *do theſe four Things.*

1. I ſhall ſhew, how the *Heart* or *Conſcience* ought to be informed, in order to its founding in us a rational Confidence towards God.

2. I ſhall ſhew, *how* and *by what means we may* get it thus informed, and afterwards preſerve and keep it ſo.

3. I ſhall ſhew, *Whence it is* that the Teſtimony of Conſcience thus informed comes to be ſo Authentick, and ſo much to be relied upon: And,

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, I ſhall aſſign *ſome particular Caſes or Inſtances*, in which the Confidence ſuggeſted by it, does moſt eminently ſhew, and exert it ſelf.

1. And firſt for the Firſt of theſe, *How the Heart or Conſcience*, &c. It is certain, that no Man can have any ſuch Confidence towards God, only becauſe his Heart tells him *a Lye*; and that it may do ſo, is altogether as certain. For there is the Erroneous, as well as the rightly informed Conſcience; and if the Conſcience happens to be deluded, and thereupon to give *falſe Directions* to the Will, ſo that by Vertue of thoſe *Directi-*

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ons, it is betrayed into a Courſe of Sin: Sin does not therefore ceaſe to be Sin, becauſe a Man committed it *Conſcientiouſly*. If Conſcience comes to be perverted ſo far, as to bring a Man under a Perſwaſion, that it is either Lawfull, or his Duty, *to reſiſt the Magiſtrate, to ſeize upon his Neighbours juſt Rights, or Eſtate, to worſhip Stocks and Stones, or to lye, equivocate*, and the like, this will not *abſolve* him before God; ſince Errour, which is in it ſelf, *Evil*, can never make another Thing *Good*. He who does an unwarrantable Action, through a falſe *Information*, which *Information* he ought not to have believed, cannot in Reaſon *make the Guilt of one Sin, the Excuſe of another*.

Conſcience therefore muſt be rightly informed, before the Teſtimony of it can be Authentick, in what it pronounces concerning the Eſtate of the Soul. It muſt proceed by the Two grand Rules of *Right Reaſon and Scripture*; theſe are the Compaſs which it muſt ſteer by. For Conſcience comes *formally* to oblige, only

as it is the Meſſenger of the Mind of God to the Soul of Man; which he has revealed to him, partly by the Impreſſion of certain Notions, and Maxims upon the *Practical* Underſtanding, and partly by the declared Oracles of his Word. So far therefore as Conſcience reports any Thing agreeable to, or deducible from theſe, it is to be hearkened to, as the Great Conveyer of Truth to the Soul; but when it reports any thing diſſonant to theſe, it obliges no more than the Falſhood reported by it.

But ſince there is none who follows an *Erroneous Conſcience*, but does ſo, becauſe he thinks it *true*, and moreover thinks it true, becauſe he is perſwaded, that it proceeds according to the Two forementioned Rules of *Scripture*, and *Right Reaſon*; how ſhall a Man be able to ſatisfie himſelf, when his Conſcience is *rightly informed*, and when *poſſeſſed with an Errour*? For to affirm, that the Sentence paſſed by a *rightly informed Conſcience*, gives a Man a rational Confidence towards God; but, in the mean time, not

not to aſſign any means poſſible, by which he may know, when his Conſcience is thus *rightly informed*, and *when not*, it muſt equally bereave him of ſuch a Confidence, as placing the Condition upon which it depends wholly out of his Knowledge.

Here therefore is the Knot, here the Difficulty, how to ſtate ſome Rule of Certainty, by which Infallibly to diſtinguiſh, when the Conſcience is *right, and to be relied upon; When erroneous, and to be diſtruſted*, in the Teſtimony it gives about the Sincerity, and Safety of a Man's ſpiritual Condition.

For the Reſolution of which, I anſwer, That it is not neceſſary for a Man to be aſſured of the *Rightneſs* of his Conſcience, by ſuch an *Infallible Certainty of Perſwaſion*, as amounts to the Clearneſs of a Demonſtration; but it is ſufficient, if he knows it upon Grounds of ſuch a convinceing Probability, as ſhall exclude all rational Grounds of doubting of it. For, I cannot think, that *the confidence*, here ſpoken of, riſes ſo high as to *aſſu-*

rance.

rance. And the Reaſon is, becauſe it is manifeſtly ſuch a *Confidence*, as is common to all ſincere Chriſtians. Which yet, *Aſſurance* (we all know) is not.

The Truth is, the Word in the Original, which is παῤῥησία, ſignifies properly *Freedom, or Boldneſs of Speech*; though *the Latin* Tranſlation renders it by *Fiducia*, and ſo correſponds with the *Engliſh*, which renders it by *Confidence*. But whether *Fiducia*, or *Confidence* reaches the full Sence of παῤῥησία, may very well be diſputed. However it is certain, that neither the Word in the *Original*, nor yet in the *Tranſlation*, imports *Aſſurance*. For *Freedom*, or *Boldneſs of Speech*, I am ſure, does not; and *Fiducia*, or *Confidence*, ſignifies only a Man's being actually perſwaded of a Thing, upon better Arguments for it, than any that he can ſee againſt it; which he may very well be, and yet not *be aſſured* of it.

From all which, I conclude; That the *Confidence* here mentioned in the Text amounts to no more, than *a Rational well grounded Hope*. Such an one, as

as the Apoſtle tells us, in *Rom.* 5. 5. *maketh not aſhamed.*

And upon theſe Terms, I affirm, *That ſuch a Conſcience*, as has imployed the Utmoſt of its Ability to give it ſelf the beſt Information, and cleareſt Knowledge of its Duty, that it can, is a Rational Ground for a Man to build *ſuch an Hope upon*; and, conſequently, for him to confide in.

There is an *innate Light* in every Man, diſcovering to him the firſt Lines of Duty, in the common Notions of *Good and Evil*; which by Cultivation, and Improvement, may be advanced to higher, and brighter Diſcoveries. And from hence it is, that the Schoolmen, and Moraliſts, admit not of any *Ignorantia Juris*, ſpeaking of *Natural Moral Right*, to give excuſe to Sin. Since all ſuch Ignorance is *voluntary*, and therefore culpable; for as much as it was in every Man's Power to have prevented it, by a due Improvement of the *Light of Nature*, and the Seeds of Moral Honeſty ſown in his Heart.

If

If it be here demanded, Whether a Man may not remain ignorant of his Duty, after he has uſed the *utmoſt means* to inform himſelf of it? I anſwer, That ſo much of Duty as is abſolutely neceſſary to ſave him, he ſhall upon the uſe of ſuch a Courſe come to know; and that which he continues ignorant of, having done the utmoſt lying in his Power, that he might not be ignorant of it, ſhall never damn him. Which Aſſertion is proved thus: The Goſpel damns no body for being ignorant of that which he is not obliged to know; but that, which upon the Improvement of a Man's utmoſt Power, he cannot know, he is not obliged to know; for that otherwiſe he would be obliged to an Impoſſibility; ſince that which is out of the Compaſs of any Man's Power, is to that Man *Impoſſible*.

He therefore who exerts all the Powers, and Faculties of his Soul, and plies all Means and Opportunities in the Search of Truth, which God has vouchſafed him, may reſt upon the Judgment of his

his Conſcience ſo informed, as a Warrantable Guide of thoſe Actions, which he muſt account to God for. And if by following ſuch a Guide, he falls into the *Ditch*, the *Ditch* ſhall never drown him, or if it ſhould, the Man periſhes not by his *Sin*, but by his *Misfortune*. In a word, he who endeavours to know the utmoſt of his Duty, that he can, and practiſes the utmoſt that he knows, has the Equity and Goodneſs of the great God to ſtand as a mighty Wall, or Rampart between him, and Damnation, for any Errours or Infirmities, which the Frailty of his Condition has invincibly, and therefore *inculpably* expoſed him to.

And if a Conſcience thus qualified, and informed, be not the *Meaſure*, by which a Man may take a true Eſtimate of his Abſolution, before the Tribunal of God, all the Underſtanding of humane Nature, cannot find out any Ground for the Sinner to pitch the Sole of his Foot upon, or reſt his Conſcience with any Aſſurance, but is left in the Plunge

Plunge of Infinite Doubts, and Uncertainties, Suſpicions, and Miſgivings, both as to the Meaſures of his preſent Duty, and the final Iſſues of his future Reward.

Let this *Concluſion* therefore ſtand as the firm Reſult of the foregoing Diſcourſe, and the Foundation of what is to follow; That ſuch a Conſcience, as has not been wanting to it ſelf, in endeavouring to get the *utmoſt*, and cleareſt Information about the Will of God, that its Power, Advantages, and Opportunities could afford it, is that great *Internal Judge, whoſe Abſolution is a Rational, and ſure Ground of Confidence towards God*: And ſo I paſs to the ſecond Thing propoſed. Which is to ſhew, *How, and by what Means, we may get our Heart or Conſcience thus informed, and afterwards preſerve and keep it ſo.*

In order to which amongſt many Things, that might be alleaged as highly uſefull, and conducing to this great Work. I ſhall inſiſt upon theſe Four: As,

1. Let

1. Let a Man carefully attend to the *Voice* of his *Reaſon*, and all the Dictates of Natural Morality; ſo as by no means, to doe any thing contrary to them. For though *Reaſon is not to be relied* upon, as a Guide univerſally ſufficient to direct us what to doe; yet it is generally *to be relied* upon, and obeyed, where it tells us, what we are *not to doe*. It is, indeed, but a weak, and diminutive *Light*, compared to *Revelation*; but it ought to be no diſparagement to a *Star*, that it is not a *Sun*. Nevertheleſs, as weak, and as ſmall as it is, it is a *Light always* at hand, and though encloſed (as it were) in a dark Lanthorn, may yet be of ſingular uſe to prevent many a *foul Step*, and to keep us from many a *dangerous Fall*. And every Man brings ſuch a Degree of this Light into the World with him; that *though it cannot bring him to Heaven*; yet, if he be true to it, it will carry him a great way; indeed ſo far, that if he follows it faithfully, I doubt not, but he ſhall meet with *another Light*, which ſhall carry him quite through.

How

How far it may be improved, is evident from that high and refined Morality, which ſhined forth both in the *Lives*, and *Writings* of ſome of the Ancient Heathens, who yet had no other *Light* but this, both to *live*, and to *write* by. For how great a Man in vertue was *Cato*; of whom the Hiſtorian gives this glorious Character; *Eſſe quàm videri bonus malebat*? And of what an impregnable Integrity was *Fabricius*; of whom it was ſaid, that a Man might as well attempt *to turn the Sun out of his Courſe*, as to bring *Fabricius* to doe a baſe, or a diſhoneſt Action? And then for their Writings; what admirable Things occur in the Remains of *Pythagoras*, and the Books of *Plato*, and of ſeveral other Philoſophers? ſhort, I confeſs, of the Rules of Chriſtianity, but generally above the Lives of Chriſtians.

Which being ſo, ought not the *Light of Reaſon* to be look'd upon by us as a Rich, and a Noble Talent, and ſuch an one as we muſt account to God for? For it is certainly from him. It is a Ray of Divinity

Divinity darted into the Soul. *It is the Candle of the Lord* (as *Solomon* calls it) and God never lights us up a *Candle* either *to put out*, or to *ſleep by*. If it be made conſcious to a *Work of Darkneſs*, it will not fail to diſcover, and reprove it; and therefore the *checks* of it are to be revered, as the Echo of a *Voice from Heaven*; for, *whatſoever Conſcience binds here on Earth*, will be certainly bound there too; and it were a great Vanity, to hope, or imagine, that either Law or Goſpel will abſolve, what Natural Conſcience *condemns*. No Man ever yet offended his own *Conſcience*, but firſt, or laſt, it was revenged upon him for it. So that it will concern a Man, to treat this great Principle awfully, and warily, by ſtill obſerving what it commands, but eſpecially what it *forbids*: And, if he would have it always a faithfull, and ſincere Monitor to him, let him be ſure never to turn a *deaf Ear to it*; for *not to hear* it, is the Way to *ſilence* it. Let him ſtrictly obſerve the firſt Stirrings, and Intimations; the firſt hints, and Whi-

ſpers of *Good and Evil*, that paſs in his Heart; and this will keep Conſcience ſo quick, and vigilant, and ready to give a Man true Alarms, upon the leaſt Approach of his ſpiritual Enemy, that he ſhall be hardly capable of a great Surprize.

On the contrary, if a Man accuſtoms himſelf to Slight, or paſs over theſe firſt Motions to Good, or Shrinkings of his Conſcience from Evil, which Originally are as Natural to the Heart of Man, as the *Appetites of Hunger, and Thirſt* are to the *Stomach*; Conſcience will by Degrees grow dull, and unconcerned; and, from not *ſpying out Motes*, come at length to over-look *Beams*; from Careleſneſs it ſhall fall into a *Slumber*, and from a Slumber, it ſhall ſettle into a deep, and long *Sleep*; till, at laſt, perhaps it ſleeps it ſelf into a Lethargy, and that ſuch an one, that nothing but *Hell*, and Judgment ſhall be able to awaken it. For long *diſuſe* of any thing made for Action, will in time take away the very *uſe* of it. As I have read of one, who having

ving for a Diſguiſe, kept one of his Eyes a long time covered; when he took off the Covering, found his Eye indeed where it was, but his Sight was gone. He who would keep his Conſcience *awake*, muſt be carefull to keep it ſtirring

2. Let a Man be very *tender*, and regardfull of every pious Motion, and Suggeſtion made by *the Spirit of God* to his Heart. I do not hereby go about to eſtabliſh *Enthuſiaſm*, or ſuch phantaſtick Pretences of Intercourſe with God, as Papiſts, and Fanaticks (who in moſt Things copy *from* one another, as well as rail *at* one another) do uſually boaſt of. But certainly, if *the Evil Spirit* may, and often does ſuggeſt wicked, and vile Thoughts to the Minds of Men; as all do, and muſt grant, and is ſufficiently proved from the *Devil's putting it into the Heart of Judas, to betray Chriſt*, John 13. 2. And his *filling the Heart of Ananias, to lye to the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts 5. 3. It cannot after this, with any Colour of Reaſon be doubted, but that the *Holy Spirit of God*,

whoſe Power, and Influence to Good is much greater, than that of the *wicked Spirit* to Evil, does frequently inject into, and imprint upon the Soul many bleſſed Motions, and Impulſes to Duty, and many powerfull Avocations from Sin. So that a Man ſhall not only (as the Prophet ſays) *hear a Voice behind him*, but alſo *a Voice within him*, telling him which way he ought to go.

For doubtleſs, there is ſomething more in thoſe Expreſſions of *being led by the Spirit*, *and being taught by the Spirit*, and the like, than meer *Tropes*, and Metaphors; and nothing leſs is, or can be imported by them, than that God ſometimes *ſpeaks* to, and *converſes with* the Hearts of Men, *immediately by himſelf*: And, happy thoſe, who by thus hearing him ſpeak in a *ſtill Voice*, ſhall prevent his ſpeaking to them *in Thunder*.

But you will here ask, perhaps, how we ſhall diſtinguiſh in ſuch Motions, which of them proceed immediately from the *Spirit of God*, and which from the Conſcience? In anſwer to which, I muſt confeſs,

confeſs, that I know no certain Mark of Diſcrimination, to diſtinguiſh them by; ſave only in general, that ſuch as proceed immediately from God, uſe to ſtrike the Mind ſuddenly, and very powerfully. But then I add alſo, that as the Knowledge of this, in Point of Speculation, is ſo *nice and difficult*, ſo (thanks be to God) in Point of Practice it is not *neceſſary*. But let a Man univerſally obſerve, and obey every good Motion riſing in his Heart, knowing that every ſuch Motion proceeds from God, either *mediately*, or *immediately*; and that whether God ſpeaks *immediately* by himſelf to the Conſcience, or *mediately* by the Conſcience to the Soul, the Authority is the ſame in both, and the Contempt of either is Rebellion.

Now the Thing which I drive at, under this Head of Diſcourſe, is to ſhew, *That as* God is ſometimes pleaſed to addreſs himſelf, in this Manner to the Hearts of Men; ſo, if the *Heart will receive*, and *anſwer* ſuch Motions, by a ready, and obſequious Compliance with

them, there is no doubt, but they will both return more frequently, and ſtill more and more powerfully, till at length they produce ſuch *a Degree of Light* in the Conſcience, as ſhall give a Man, both a clear *Sight* of his Duty, and a certain *Judgment* of his Condition.

On the contrary, as all Reſiſtance whatſoever of the Dictates of Conſcience, even in the Way of Natural *Efficiency* brings a kind of Hardneſs, and *Stupefaction* upon it; So the *Reſiſtance* of theſe *peculiar Suggeſtions of the Spirit*, will cauſe in it alſo a *Judicial Hardneſs*, which is yet worſe than the other. So that God ſhall withdraw from ſuch an Heart, and the *Spirit* being *grieved* ſhall depart, and theſe *bleſſed Motions* ſhall ceaſe, and affect, and viſit it no more. The Conſequence of which is very terrible; as rendring a Man *paſt feeling*. And then the leſs he feels in this World, the more he ſhall *be ſure* to feel in the next. But,

3. Becauſe the *Light* of *Natural Conſcience*, is in many Things defective, and dimn, and the *Internal Voice of God's Spirit*,

rit, not always diſtinguiſhable, above all, let a Man attend to the Mind of God, uttered in his *Revealed Word*. I ſay, his *Revealed Word*. By which, I do not mean, that Myſterious, Extraordinary, (and *of late*, ſo much ſtudied) Book called the *Revelation*, and which perhaps the more it is ſtudied, the leſs 'tis underſtood, as generally either finding a Man crack'd, or making him ſo; But I mean thoſe other Writings of the *Prophets*, and *Apoſtles*, which exhibit to us a plain, *ſure*, perfect, and intelligible Rule; a Rule that will neither fail, nor diſtract ſuch as make uſe of it. A Rule to judge of the two former Rules by: For nothing that contradicts the *Revealed Word of God*, is either the Voice of *Right Reaſon*, or of the *Spirit of God*; nor is it poſſible, that it ſhould be ſo, without God's contradicting himſelf.

And therefore we ſee, what high Elogies are given to the *Written Word*, by the inſpired Pen-men of both *Teſtaments*. *It giveth Underſtanding to the ſimple*, ſays *David*, in *Pſalm* 119. 130. And that, you will ſay, is no ſuch eaſie Matter to doe.

It is able to *make the Man of God perfect*, (ſays St. *Paul*) 2 *Tim.* 3. 17. *It is quick and powerfull, and ſharper than any Two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of the Soul, and Spirit; and is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts, and Intents of the Heart*, Heb. 4. 12. Now what a Force and Fulneſs, what a Vigour and Emphaſis is there in all theſe Expreſſions! Enough (one would think) to recommend and endear the Scriptures, even to the Papiſts themſelves. For if (as the Text ſays) *They give underſtanding to the ſimple*; I know none more concerned to read and ſtudy them, than their Popes.

Wherefore ſince the *Light*, and Energy of the *Written Word* is ſo mighty, let a Man bring and hold his Conſcience to this ſteady Rule: The unalterable Rectitude of which, will infallibly diſcover the *Rectitude*, or *Obliquity*, of whatſoever it is applied to. We ſhall find it a *Rule*, both to inſtruct us what *to doe*, and to aſſure us in what *we have done*. For though *Natural Conſcience* ought to be liſtned to, yet it is *Revelation* alone, that is to be relied

lied upon : *As we* may obſerve in the Works of Art, a Judicious Artiſt will indeed *uſe* his *Eye*, but he will *truſt* only to his Rule.

There is not any one Action whatſoever, which a Man *ought to doe*, or to *forbear*, but the Scripture will give him a clear Precept, or Prohibition for it.

So that if a Man will commit ſuch Rules to his Memory, and ſtock his Mind with Portions of Scripture anſwerable to all the Heads of Duty and Practice, his Conſcience can never be at a Loſs, either for a Direction of his Actions, or an Anſwer to a Temptation : It was the very Courſe which our Saviour himſelf took, when the Devil plied him with Temptation upon Temptation. Still, he had a *ſutable Scripture* ready to repell, and baffle them all, one after another : Every pertinent Text urged home, being a direct Stabb to a Temptation.

Let a Man therefore conſider, and recount with himſelf the ſeveral Duties, and Vertues of a Chriſtian. Such as, *Temperance*, *Meekneſs*, *Charity*, *Purity of Heart*,

Heart, *Pardoning of Enemies*, *Patience*. (I had almoſt ſaid, *Paſſive Obedience* too, but that ſuch old faſhioned Chriſtianity, ſeems as much out of Date with ſome, *as Chriſt's Divinity, and Satisfaction.*) I ſay, let a Man conſider theſe, and the like *Vertues*, together with the *contrary Sins and Vices*, that do oppoſe them; and then, as out of a full Armory, or Magazine, let him furniſh his Conſcience with Texts of Scripture, particularly enjoyning the one, and forbidding, or threatning the other. And yet I do not ſay, that he ſhould ſtuff his Mind like the *Margent* of ſome Authors, with *Chapter* and *Verſe* heaped together, at all Adventures; but only that he ſhould fortifie it with ſome few Texts, which are home, and appoſite to his Caſe. And a Conſcience thus ſupplied, will be like a Man armed at all Points; and always ready either to receive, or to attack his Enemy. Otherwiſe it is not a Man's *having Arms in his houſe*; no, nor yet his having Courage, and Skill to uſe them; but it is his having them ſtill about him, which

which muſt both ſecure him from being ſet upon, and defend him when he is.

Accordingly, Men muſt know, that without taking the forementioned Courſe, all that they do in this Matter, is but loſt Labour; and that they *read the Scriptures* to as little purpoſe, as *ſome uſe to quote them*; Much *Reading* being like much *Eating*, wholly uſeleſs without Digeſtion; and it is impoſſible for a Man to digeſt his Meat, without alſo retaining it.

Till Men get what they read into their *Minds*, and fix it in their *Memories*, they keep their Religion as they uſe to doe their Bibles, only in their Cloſet, or carry it in their Pocket; and that, you may imagine, muſt improve, and affect the Soul, juſt as much as a Man's having plenty of Proviſion only in his Stores, will nouriſh, and ſupport his Body. When Men forget the Word heard, or read by them, the *Devil is ſaid to ſteal it out of their Hearts*, Luke 8. 12. And for this Cauſe, we do with as much *Reaſon*, as *Propriety of Speech*, call the Committing

mitting of a Thing to memory, the *getting it by heart.* For it is the *Memory*, that muſt tranſmit it to the *Heart*; and it is in vain to expect, that the Heart ſhould keep its hold of any Truth, when the Memory has let it go.

4. The *Fourth* and *Laſt* way, that I ſhall mention, *for the getting of the Conſcience rightly informed*, and afterwards *keeping* it ſo, is frequently and impartially to account with it. It is with a Man and his Conſcience, as with one Man, and another; amongſt whom we uſe to ſay, that *Even Reckoning makes laſting Friends*; and the way to make Reckonings *even*, I am ſure, is to make them *often.* Delays in Accompts are always ſuſpicious; and bad enough in themſelves, but commonly much worſe in their Cauſe. For, to *deferr* an Accompt, is the ready way to *perplex* it; and, when it comes to be perplexed, and intricate, no Man, either as to his Temporal or Spiritual Eſtate, can know of himſelf *what he is*, or *what he has*, or upon what bottom he ſtands. But the

the amazing Difficulty, and greatneſs of his Accompt, will rather terrifie than inform him; and keep him from ſetting heartily about ſuch a Task, as he deſpairs ever to go through with. For, no Man willingly begins, what he has no hope to finiſh.

But, let a Man apply to his Work, by frequent Returns, and ſhort Intervals, while the Heap is ſmall, and the Particulars few, and he will find it eaſie, and conquerable; And his Conſcience, like a faithfull Steward, ſhall give him in a plain, open, and entire Account of himſelf, and hide nothing from him. Whereas we know, if a Steward or Caſhier be ſuffered to run on from year to year without bringing him to a Reckoning, it is odds but ſuch a ſottiſh forbearance, will, in time, teach him to ſhuffle; and ſtrongly tempt him to be a Cheat, if not alſo make him ſo: For, as the Accompt *runs on*, generally the Accomptant *goes backward.*

And for this Cauſe, ſome judge it adviſeable for a Man to account with

his

his Heart every day; and this, no doubt, is the beſt, and ſureſt Courſe; for ſtill the *oftner*, the *better*. And ſome preſcribe Accompting once a Week; longer than which it is, by no means, ſafe to delay it: For, a Man ſhall find his Heart deceitfull, and his Memory weak, and Nature extremely averſe from ſeeking narrowly after That, which it is unwilling to find; and being found, will aſſuredly diſturb it.

So that upon the whole matter it is infinitely abſurd to think that *Conſcience* can be kept in order without frequent Examination. If a man would have his Conſcience deal clearly with him, he muſt deal ſeverely with That. Often *ſcouring* and cleanſing it will make it *bright*; and, when it is ſo, he may ſee himſelf in it: And, if he ſees any Thing amiſs, let this ſatisfie him, That no man is, or can be, the *worſe* for knowing the very *worſt* of himſelf.

On the contrary; if *Conſcience* by a long neglect of, and diſ-acquaintance with it ſelf, comes to contract an inve-

terate

terate Ruſt or Soil, a man may as well expect to ſee his Face in a *Mud-wall*, as that ſuch a Conſcience ſhould give him a true Report of his Condition; no, it leaves him wholly in the Dark, as to the greateſt Concern he has in both Worlds. He can neither tell, whether God be his *Friend*, or his *Enemy*, or rather he has ſhrewd Cauſe to ſuſpect him his *Enemy*, and cannot poſſibly know him to be his *Friend*. And this being his Caſe, he muſt live in Ignorance, and die in Ignorance; and it will be hard for a man to die *in it*, without dying by *it* too.

And now, what a *wretched* Condition muſt that man needs be in, whoſe Heart is in ſuch Confuſion, ſuch Darkneſs, and ſuch a ſettled Blindneſs, that it ſhall not be able to tell him ſo much as one true Word of himſelf? *Flatter* him it may (I confeſs) (as thoſe are generally good at *flattering*, who are good for nothing elſe) but, in the mean time, the poor Man is left under the fatal Neceſſity of a remedileſs Deluſion: For, in judging

of

of a man's Self, if *Conſcience* either cannot or will not inform him, there is a certain Thing called *Self-love* that will be ſure to deceive him. And thus I have ſhewn, in four ſeveral Particulars, *what is to be done*, both for the getting and keeping of the Conſcience, ſo informed, as that it may be able to give us a Rational *Confidence towards God*. As,

1. That the *Voice* of Reaſon, in all the Dictates of *Natural Morality*, ought carefully to be attended to by a ſtrict Obſervance of what it *commands*, but eſpecially of what it *forbids*.

2. That every Pious Motion from *the Spirit of God* ought tenderly to be cheriſhed, and by no means checked or *quenched* either by Reſiſtance or Neglect.

3. That *Conſcience* is to be kept cloſe to the Rule of the written Word.

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, That it is frequently to be examined, and ſeverely accounted with.

And, I doubt not, but a *Conſcience* thus diſciplined, ſhall give a man ſuch a faith-

a faithfull account of himſelf, as ſhall never ſhame, nor lurch the *Confidence*, which he ſhall take up from it.

Nevertheleſs, to prevent all miſtakes in ſo critical a Caſe, and ſo high a Concern. I ſhall cloſe up the foregoing Particulars with this *twofold Caution.*

Firſt, Let no man *think*, that every *Doubting* or *Miſ-giving* about the Safety of his Spiritual Eſtate, over-throws the *Confidence hitherto ſpoken of.* For (as I ſhew before) the *Confidence* mentioned in the Text, is not properly *Aſſurance*, but only a *Rational*, *well-grounded Hope*; And therefore may very well conſiſt with ſome Returns of *Doubting*. For, we know, in that Pious and Excellent *Confeſſion* and *Prayer*, made by the poor Man to our Saviour, in *Mark* 9. 24. how, in the very ſame Breath, in which he ſays, *Lord, I believe*; He ſays alſo, *Lord, help my unbelief.* So that we ſee here, that the Sincerity of our *Faith* or *Confidence* will not ſecure us againſt all Viciſſitudes of Wavering or Diſtruſt; indeed, no more than a ſtrong Athle-

tick Conſtitution of Body will ſecure a man alway againſt Heats, and Colds, and Rheums, and ſuch-like *Indiſpoſitions*.

And one great Reaſon of this, is; Becauſe ſuch a *Faith* or *Confidence* as we have been treating of, reſides in the Soul or Conſcience, as *an Habit*. And *Habits*, we know, are by no means either inconſiſtent with, or deſtroyed by every contrary *Act*. But, eſpecially, in the Caſe now before us, where the Truth and Strength of *our Confidence towards God* does not conſiſt ſo much, *in the preſent Act*, by which it exerts it ſelf, no, nor yet *in the Habit* producing this Act; as it does in the *Ground* or *Reaſon*, which this Confidence is *built upon*; which being the *ſtanding ſincerity of a man's Heart*, though the preſent *Act* be interrupted, (as, no doubt, through *Infirmity*, or *Temptation*, it may be very often,) yet, ſo long as *that ſincerity*, upon which this *Confidence* was firſt founded, does continue, as ſoon as the *Temptation* is removed, and gone, the fore-mentioned *Faith*,

or

or *Affiance*, will, by renewed, vigorous and freſh Acts, recover and exert it ſelf, and with great comfort, and ſatisfaction of mind, give a man *confidence towards God*. Which, though it be, indeed, a lower, and a leſſer thing than *Aſſurance*, yet, as to all the Purpoſes of a Pious Life, may, for ought I ſee, prove much more uſefull; as both affording a man *due comfort*, and yet leaving room for *due caution* too; which are Two of the principal Uſes that Religion ſerves for, in this *World*.

2. The other *Caution*, with reference to the foregoing Diſcourſe, is this: *Let no man*, from what has been ſaid, reckon a *bare ſilence of Conſcience* in not *accuſing*, or *diſturbing* him, a ſufficient Argument for *Confidence towards God*. For, ſuch a *Silence* is ſo far from being always ſo, that it is uſually worſe than the fierceſt and loudeſt *Accuſations*; ſince it may, and for the moſt part does proceed from a kind of *numbneſs*, or ſtupidity of *Conſcience*; and an abſolute Dominion obtained by Sin over the Soul; ſo that it

ſhall not ſo much as *dare to complain*, *or make a ſtir.* For, as our Saviour ſays, *Luke* 11. 21. *while the ſtrong Man armed keeps his Palace, his Goods are in peace.* So, while Sin rules and governs with a ſtrong Hand, and has wholly ſubdued the Conſcience to a ſlaviſh Subjection to its Tyrannical Yoke, the Soul *ſhall be at Peace*, ſuch a falſe *Peace* as it is; but for that very Cauſe *worſe* a great deal, and more deſtructive, than, when, by continual Alarms and Aſſaults, it gives a man neither Peace nor Truce, Quiet nor Intermiſſion. And therefore it is very remarkable, that the Text expreſſes the ſound Eſtate of the Heart or the Conſcience, here ſpoken of, not barely by its *not accuſing*, but by its *not condemning* us; which word imports properly an Acquitment, or Diſcharge of a man upon ſome precedent *Accuſation*, and *a full Trial and Cognizance of his Cauſe* had thereupon. For as *Condemnation*, being a *Law Term*, and ſo relating to the Judicial Proceedings of *Law Courts*, muſt ſtill pre-ſuppoſe an Hearing of the Cauſe, before

before any Sentence can paſs; ſo likewiſe in the *Court of Conſcience*, there muſt be a ſtrict and impartial Enquiry into all a man's Actions, and a through hearing of all that can be pleaded for, and againſt him, before Conſcience can rationally either *condemn*, or *diſcharge him*: And if, indeed, upon ſuch a fair and full Trial he can come off, he is then *Rectus in curiâ*, clear and *innocent*, and conſequently may reap all that ſatisfaction from himſelf, which it is Natural for *Innocence* to afford the perſon who has it. I do not here ſpeak of a *Legal Innocence*, (none but Sots and Quakers dream of ſuch things;) For, as St. *Paul* ſays, *Galat.* 2. 16. *By the Works of the Law ſhall no fleſh living be juſtified:* But I ſpeak of an *Evangelical Innocence*; ſuch an one as the Oeconomy of the Goſpel accepts, whatſoever the Law enjoyns; and though mingled with ſeveral Infirmities, and Defects, yet amounts to ſuch a pitch of Righteouſneſs, as we call *Sincerity*. And whoſoever has this, ſhall never be Damned for want of the other.

And now, how vaſtly does it concern all thoſe, who ſhall think it worth their while to be in earneſt with their Immortal Souls, not to abuſe and delude themſelves with a falſe Confidence? a thing ſo eaſily taken up, and ſo hardly laid down. Let no man conclude, becauſe his Conſcience *ſays nothing to him*, that therefore it *has nothing to ſay*. Poſſibly ſome never ſo much as doubted of the ſafety of their Spiritual Eſtate, in all their Lives; and if ſo, let them not flatter themſelves, but reſt aſſured, that they have ſo much the more reaſon a great deal to doubt of it now. For the Cauſes of ſuch a profound *ſtillneſs*, are generally groſs Ignorance, or long Cuſtom of Sinning, or both; and theſe are very dreadfull Symptoms indeed, to ſuch as are not *Hell and Damnation-proof*. When a man's Wounds ceaſe to *ſmart*, only becauſe he has loſt his *feeling*, they are never the leſs *mortal* for his not ſeeing his Need of a *Chirurgeon*. It is not meer, actual, preſent Eaſe; but Eaſe after Pain, which brings the moſt durable

and

and ſolid Comfort. Acquitment before Trial can be no ſecurity. *Great* and *ſtrange Calms* uſually portend, and go before the moſt violent *Storms*. And therefore, ſince *Storms* and *Calms* (eſpecially with reference to the State of the Soul) doe always follow one another; Certainly of the Two, it is much more Eligible, to have the *Storm firſt*, and the *Calm afterwards*: Since a Calm before a Storm is commonly a Peace of a man's own making; *but a Calm, after a Storm*, a Peace of God's.

To which God, who only can ſpeak ſuch Peace to us, as neither the World nor the Devil ſhall be able to take from us, be rendred and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now and for ever-more. Amen.

A Further

ACCOUNT

OF THE

Nature and Meaſures of Conſcience:

IN A

SERMON

On 1 *JOHN* III. 21.

PREACHED

Before the UNIVERSITY at *Chriſt-Church*, Oxon. *Octob.* 30. 1692.

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1 JOHN III. 21.

Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, we have Confidence towards God.

I Have diſcourſed once already upon theſe Words in this place. In which Diſcourſe, after I had ſet down *four ſeveral*

veral falſe Grounds, upon which, Men, in judging of the ſafety of their Spiritual Eſtate, were apt *to found a wrong Confidence towards God*, and ſhewn the Falſity of them all; and, that there was nothing but *a Man's own Heart or Conſcience*, which, in this great Concern, he could with any ſafety rely upon; I did, in the next place, caſt the further Proſecution of the Words under theſe *four following Particulars*.

1. To ſhew, *How the Heart or Conſcience* ought to be Informed, in order to its founding in us a Rational Confidence towards God.

2. To ſhew, *How, and by what means* we may get our Conſcience thus informed, and afterwards preſerve and keep it ſo.

3. To ſhew, *Whence it is*, that the Teſtimony of Conſcience, thus informed, comes to be ſo Authentick, and ſo much to be relied upon. And,

4ly. and Laſtly, *To aſſign ſome particular Caſes or Inſtances*, in which the Confidence ſuggeſted by it, does moſt eminently ſhew, and exert it ſelf. Upon

Upon the firſt of which Heads; to wit, *How the Heart or Conſcience ought to be Informed, in order to its founding in us a Rational Confidence towards God*, after I had premiſed ſomething about an *Erroneous Conſcience*, and ſhewn, both what *Influence* that ought to have upon us, and what *Regard* we ought to have to that, in this matter, I gathered the Reſult of all into this one Concluſion; Namely, *That ſuch a Conſcience, as has not been wanting to it ſelf, in endeavouring the utmoſt Knowledge of its Duty, and the cleareſt Information about the Will of God, that its Power, Advantages, and Opportunities could afford it, is that great Internal Judge, whoſe Abſolution is a Rational, and ſure Ground of Confidence towards God.* This I then inſiſted upon at large, and from thence proceeded to the

2*d.* Particular; Which was to ſhew, *How, and by what means we might get our Conſcience thus Informed, and afterwards preſerve and keep it ſo.*

Where, amongſt thoſe many Ways and Methods, which might, no doubt, have

have been aſſigned, as highly conducing to this purpoſe, I ſingled out, and inſiſted upon, only theſe Four. As,

1*ſt*. That *the Voice of Reaſon, in all the Dictates of Natural Morality*, was ſtill carefully to be attended to by a ſtrict obſervance of what it commanded, but eſpecially, of what it forbad.

2*ly*. That *every Pious Motion from the Spirit of God* was tenderly to be cheriſhed, and by no means quenched or checked either by Reſiſtance or Neglect.

3*ly*. That Conſcience was ſtill to be *kept cloſe to the Rule of God's written Word*; And,

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, *That it was frequently to be examined, and ſeverely accounted with.*

Theſe things alſo, I then more fully enlarged upon; and ſo cloſed up all with a *double Caution*, and that of no ſmall Importance as to the Caſe then before us: As,

Firſt, *That no man* ſhould reckon every *doubting or miſ-giving of his Heart*, about the ſafety of his Spiritual Eſtate, inconſiſtent with that *Confidence towards God*,

God, which is here ſpoken of in the Text: And, ſecondly, *That no man* ſhould account a *bare ſilence of Conſcience* in not *accuſing or diſturbing him*, a ſufficient ground for ſuch a Confidence. Of both which, I then ſhew the Fatal Conſequence: And ſo, not to trouble you with any more Repetitions than theſe, which were juſt neceſſary to lay before you the Coherence of one thing with another, I ſhall now paſs to the *Third* of thoſe Four Particulars firſt propoſed: Which was to ſhew, *Whence it is, that the Teſtimony of Conſcience* (*concerning a man's Spiritual Eſtate*) *comes to be ſo Authentick, and ſo much to be relied upon.*

Now the *force* and *credit* of its Teſtimony ſtands upon this double Ground.

1. The *High Office*, which it holds immediately from God himſelf, in the Soul of Man; And,

2*ly*. Thoſe *Properties* or *Qualities* which peculiarly fit it for the diſcharge of this *High Office*, in all Things relating to the Soul.

1. And

1. And firſt, for its *Office*. It is no leſs than *God's Vicegerent* or *Deputy*, doing all things by immediate Commiſſion from Him. It commands, and dictates every thing in God's Name; and ſtamps every *word* with an Almighty Authority. So that it is (as it were) a kind of *Copy* or *Tranſcript* of the Divine Sentence, and an Interpreter of the Senſe of Heaven. And from hence it is, that *Sins againſt Conſcience* (as all Sins *againſt Light and Conviction* are, by way of Eminence, ſo called) are of ſo peculiar and tranſcendent a guilt. For, that every ſuch Sin is a daring and direct Defiance of the Divine Authority, as it is ſignified and reported to a man by his Conſcience, and thereby ultimately terminates in God himſelf.

Nay, and this *Vicegerent of God* has one *Prerogative* above all God's other Earthly Vicegerents; to wit, that *it can never be depoſed*. Such a ſtrange, ſacred, and inviolable Majeſty has God imprinted upon this Faculty; not, indeed, as upon *an Abſolute, Independent Soveraign*, but

but yet with ſo great a Communication of ſomething next to Soveraignty, that while it keeps within its proper compaſs, it is controllable by no mortal Power upon Earth. For, not the greateſt Monarch in the World can countermand Conſcience ſo far, as to make it *condemn*, where it would otherwiſe *acquit*; or *acquit*, where it would otherwiſe *condemn*; No, neither *Sword* nor *Scepter* can come at it; but it is above, and beyond the reach of both.

And if it were not for this Awfull and Majeſtick Character which it bears, whence could it be, that the ſtouteſt and braveſt Hearts droop and ſneak when Conſcience frowns; and the moſt abject and afflicted Wretch feels an unſpeakable, and even triumphant Joy when the *Judge within* abſolves and applauds him. When a man has done any villainous Act, though under Countenance of the higheſt Place and Power, and under Covert of the cloſeſt Secrecy, his Conſcience for all that, ſtrikes him like a clap of Thunder, and depreſſes him to a perpetual

petual Trepidation, Horror, and Poorneſs of Spirit; So that like *Nero*, though ſurrounded with his *Roman* Legions and *Pretorian* Bands, he yet ſculks and hides himſelf, and is ready to fly *to* every thing for Refuge, though he ſees nothing to fly *from*. And all this, becauſe he has heard a condemning Sentence from within, which the ſecret fore-bodings of his Mind tell him will be ratified by a ſad and certain Execution from above; on the other ſide, what makes a man ſo chearfull, ſo bright and confident in his Comforts, but becauſe he finds himſelf acquitted by God's *High Commiſſioner* and *Deputy?* Which is as much as a Pardon under God's own Hand, under the *Broad Seal of Heaven* (as I may ſo expreſs it.) For a King never Condemns any whom his Judges have Abſolved, nor Abſolves whom his Judges have Condemned, whatſoever the People and Republicans may.

Now from this Principle; *That the Authority of Conſcience ſtands founded upon its Vicegerency and Deputation under God.*

Several

Several very important Inferences may, or rather indeed unavoidably muſt enſue. Two of which I ſhall ſingle out, and ſpeak of: As,

Firſt, We collect from hence *the Abſurdity and Impertinence*; And,

Secondly, The *Impudence and Impiety* of moſt of thoſe *Pretences of Conſcience*, which have born ſuch a *mighty* ſway all the World over; and in theſe poor Nations eſpecially.

1. And firſt, for the *Abſurdity and Impertinence of them.* What a rattle and a noiſe has this word *Conſcience* made? How many Battels has it fought? how many Churches has it robbed, ruined and *reformed* to Aſhes? how many Laws has it *trampled* upon, *diſpenced* with, and *addreſſed* againſt? And, in a word, how many Governments has it over-turned? Such is the miſchievous force of a plauſible Word, applied to a deteſtable Thing.

The Allegation, or Plea of Conſcience, ought never to be admitted barely for it ſelf: For when a Thing obliges only

only by a borrowed Authority, it is ridiculous to alledge it for its own. Take a *Lieutenant*, a *Commiſſioner* or *Ambaſſador* of any Prince; and ſo far as he repreſents his Prince, all that he does, or declares under that capacity, has the ſame force and validity, as if actually done, or declared by the Prince himſelf in Perſon. But then how far does this reach? why, juſt ſo far as he keeps cloſe to his *Inſtructions*: But, when he once baulks them, though what he does, may be indeed a *Publick Crime*, or a *National Miſchief*, yet it is but a *Private Act*; and the Doer of it may chance to pay his Head for his Preſumption. For ſtill, as *great* as the Authority of ſuch kind of Perſons is, it is not founded upon their *own Will*, nor upon their *own Judgment*, but upon their *Commiſſion*.

In like manner, every Dictate of this *Vicegerent of God*, where it has a *Divine Word or Precept* to back it, carries a *Divine* Authority with it. But, if no ſuch *Word* can be produced, it may indeed be a ſtrong *Opinion*, or *Perſwaſion*, but

it is not *Conſcience*: And no one Thing in the World has done more Miſchief, and cauſed more Deluſions amongſt Men, than their not diſtinguiſhing between *Conſcience*, and *meer Opinion* or *Perſwaſion*.

Conſcience is a Latin Word, (though with an Engliſh Termination,) and, according to the very Notation of it, imports a *double or joint Knowledge*; to wit, One of a Divine Law or Rule, and the Other of a man's own Action: And ſo is properly *the Application of a General Law, to a Particular Inſtance of Practice*. The Law of God, for example, ſays, *Thou ſhalt not ſteal*; and the Mind of Man tells him, that the taking of ſuch or ſuch a thing from a perſon lawfully poſſeſſed of it, is *Stealing*. Whereupon, the Conſcience joyning the Knowledge of both theſe together, pronounces in the Name of God, *That ſuch a Particular Action ought not to be done*. And this is the true procedure of Conſcience, always ſuppoſing *a Law from God*, before it pretends to lay any Obligation upon Man:

Man: For ſtill I averr, that Conſcience neither is, nor ought to be its own Rule.

I queſtion not, I confeſs, but meer *Opinion* or *Perſwaſion* may be every whit as ſtrong, and have as forcible an Influence upon a man's Actions as *Conſcience* it ſelf. But then (we know) *Strength* or *Force* is one Thing, and *Authority* quite another. As a Rogue upon the High-way may have as ſtrong an Arm, and take off a man's Head as cleverly as the *Executioner*. But then there is a vaſt Diſparity in the Two Actions, when one of them is *Murther*, and the other *Juſtice*: Nay, and our Saviour himſelf told his Diſciples, *That Men ſhould both kill them, and think that in ſo doing they did God ſervice*. So that here (we ſee) was a full *Opinion and Perſwaſion*, and a very Zealous one too, of the high Meritoriouſneſs of what they did; but ſtill there was no *Law*, no *Word* or *Command* of God to ground it upon, and conſequently it was *not Conſcience*.

Now the *Notion of Conſcience* thus ſtated, if firmly kept to, and throughly driven home, would effectually baffle and confound all thoſe ſenceleſs, though clamorous Pretences, of the *Schiſmatical Oppoſers of the Conſtitutions of our Church.* In defence of which, I ſhall not ſpeak ſo much as one ſyllable againſt the *Indulgence and Toleration* granted to theſe Men. No; ſince they have it, let them (in God's Name) enjoy it, and the Government make the beſt of it. But ſince I cannot find that the *Law which tolerates* them in their way of Worſhip (and it does no more) does at all *forbid* us to defend ours, it were earneſtly to be wiſhed, that all hearty Lovers of the Church of *England* would aſſert its excellent Conſtitution more vigorouſly now than ever: And eſpecially in ſuch Congregations as this; in which there are ſo many young Perſons, upon the *well*, or *ill principling* of whom (next under God) depends the happineſs or miſery of this Church and State. For, if ſuch ſhould be generally prevailed upon

upon by *Hopes* or *Fears*, by *baſe Examples*, by *Trimming* and *Time-ſerving*, (which are but Two Words for the ſame Thing) to abandon, and betray *the Church of England*, by nauſeating her pious, prudent, and wholſome Orders, (of which I have ſeen ſome ſcurvy Inſtances,) we may reſt aſſured, That this will certainly produce *Confuſion*, and that *Confuſion* will as certainly end in *Popery*.

And therefore, ſince the *Liturgy*, *Rites*, and *Ceremonies* of our Church, have been, and ſtill are, ſo much cavilled and ſtruck at; and all upon a Plea of *Conſcience*, it will concern us, as becomes Men of Senſe, ſeriouſly to examine the force of this Plea; which our Adverſaries are ſtill ſetting up againſt us as the Grand Pillar and Buttreſs of *the good Old Cauſe* of Non-conformity. For, come to any Diſſenting Brother, and ask him, Why cannot you communicate with the Church of *England*? *Oh*, (ſays he) *it is againſt my Conſcience*; *my Conſcience will not ſuffer me to Pray by a Set-form, to Kneel at*

the Sacrament, to hear Divine Service read by one in a Surplice; or to uſe the Croſs in Baptiſm; or the like.

Very well; And is this the Caſe then, that it is all *pure Conſcience* that keeps you from complying with the Rule and Order of the Church in theſe matters? If ſo, then produce me ſome *Word* or *Law of God* forbidding theſe things. For *Conſcience* never commands or forbids any thing Authentically, but there is ſome *Law of God*, which commands or forbids it firſt. *Conſcience* (as might be eaſily ſhewn) being no diſtinct Power or Faculty from the Mind of Man, *but the Mind of Man it ſelf applying the General Rule of God's Law to particular Caſes and Actions*. This is truly and properly Conſcience. And therefore ſhew me ſuch a *Law*; and that, either as a *Neceſſary Dictate of Right Reaſon, or a Poſitive Injunction in God's Revealed Word*: (For theſe Two are all the Ways, by which God ſpeaks to Men now-a-days;) I ſay, ſhew me ſomething from hence, which *countermands*, or *condemns* all or any of the

the fore-mentioned *Ceremonies of our Church*, and then I will yield the Cauſe. But if no ſuch *Reaſon*, no ſuch *Scripture* can be brought to appear in their behalf againſt us, but that with *ſcrewed Face*, and *dolefull Whine*, they only ply you with ſenceleſs Harangues of *Conſcience*, againſt *carnal Ordinances*, the *Dead Letter*, and *human Inventions* on the one hand, and loud Out-cries for a *further Reformation* on the other; then reſt you aſſured, that they have a deſign upon your *Pocket*, and that the word *Conſcience* is uſed only as an Inſtrument to pick it; and more particularly, as it calls for a *further Reformation*, ſignifies no more, with reference to the Church, than as if one man ſhould come to another and ſay, *Sir, I have already taken away your Cloak, and doe fully intend (if I can) to take away your Coat alſo.* This is the true meaning of this word, *further Reformation*; and ſo long as you underſtand it in this ſence, you cannot be impoſed upon by it.

Well; but if theſe mighty Men at *Chapter* and *Verſe* can produce you no

Scripture to over-throw our Church-ceremonies, I will undertake to produce Scripture enough to warrant them; even all thoſe places, which *abſolutely* enjoyn Obedience, and Submiſſion to *Lawfull* Governours in all *not unlawfull Things*; particularly that in 1 *Pet* 2. 13. and that in *Heb.* 13. 17. (of which two places more again preſently) together with that other in 1 *Cor.* 14. laſt *verſe*, enjoyning *Order* and *Decency* in God's Worſhip, and in all things relating to it. And conſequently, till theſe Men can prove the *fore-mentioned* Things, ordered by our Church, to be either intrinſecally unlawfull, or undecent, I doe here affirm by the Authority of the foregoing Scriptures, That the uſe of them, as they ſtand eſtabliſhed amongſt us, is neceſſary; and that all Pretences, or Pleas of Conſcience, to the contrary, are nothing but *Cant* and *Cheat*, *Flam* and *Deluſion*. In a word, the Ceremonies of the Church of *England* are as neceſſary, as the Injunctions of an undoubtedly lawfull Authority, the Practice of the Primitive

mitive Church, and the General Rules of Decency, determined to Particulars of the greateſt Decency, can make them *neceſſary*. And I would not for all the World be arraigned at the laſt and great Day for diſturbing the Church, and diſobeying Government, and have no better Plea for ſo doing, than what thoſe of the Separation were ever yet able to defend themſelves by.

But ſome will here ſay perhaps: If this be all, that you require of us, we both can, and doe bring you Scripture againſt your Church-ceremonies; even that, which condemns all *Will-worſhip*, *Col.* 2. 23. and ſuch other like places. To which I anſwer, firſt; That the *Will-worſhip*, forbidden in that Scripture, is ſo termed, not from the *Circumſtance*, but from the *Object* of Religious Worſhip; and we readily own, That it is by no means in the Church's Power to appoint, or chuſe, *whom*, or *what* it will Worſhip. But that does not inferr, That it is not therefore in the Church's Power to appoint *how*, *and in what manner* it will

will Worſhip the true Object of Religious Worſhip; provided, that in ſo doing, it obſerves ſuch Rules of Decency, as are proper, and conducing to that purpoſe. So that this Scripture is wholly Irrelative to the caſe before us; and as impertinently applied to it, as any poor Text in the *Revelation* was ever applied to the grave and profound Whimſies of ſome Modern Interpreters. But, 2*dly*. to this Objection about *Will-worſhip*, I anſwer yet further; That the fore-mentioned Ceremonies of the Church of *England*, are no *Worſhip*, nor *part of God's Worſhip* at all, nor were ever pretended ſo to be; and, if they are not ſo much as *Worſhip*, I am ſure, they cannot be *Will-worſhip*. But we own them only for *Circumſtances*, *Modes*, and *Solemn Uſages* by which God's Worſhip is orderly and decently performed: I ſay, we pretend them not to be *parts of Divine Worſhip*; but, for all that, to be ſuch things as the Divine Worſhip, in ſome Inſtance or other, cannot be without: For that, which neither does, nor can *give vital*

Heat,

Heat, may yet be neceſſary to *preſerve it*: And he, who ſhould ſtrip himſelf of all, that is *no part of himſelf*, would quickly find, or rather *feel* the Inconvenience of ſuch a Practice; and have cauſe to wiſh for a Body, as *void of ſenſe*, as ſuch an Argument.

Now the Conſequence in both theſe caſes is perfectly Parallel; and if ſo, you may reſt ſatisfied; That, what is *nonſenſe* upon a Principle of Reaſon, will never be *ſenſe* upon a Principle of Religion. But as touching the Neceſſity of the aforeſaid *Uſages* in the *Church of England*, I ſhall lay down theſe *four* Propoſitions.

1. That *Circumſtantials* in the Worſhip of God (as well as in all other humane Actions) are ſo neceſſary to it, that it cannot poſſibly be *performed* without them.

2. That *Decency* in the *Circumſtantials* of God's Worſhip is abſolutely neceſſary.

3. That the *General* Rule and Precept of *Decency* is not capable of being reduced to Practice, but as it is exemplified in,

and

and determined to *particular Inſtances*. And,

4*ly*. and *Laſtly*, That there is more of the *General Nature of Decency* in thoſe particular *Uſages* and *Ceremonies* which the Church of *England* has pitched upon, than is, or can be ſhewn in any other whatſoever.

Theſe things I affirm; and when you have put them all together, let any one give me a ſolid and ſufficient Reaſon for the giving up thoſe few Ceremonies of our Church, if he can. All the Reaſon that I could ever yet hear alleaged by the chief Factors for a General Intromiſſion of all Sorts, Sects, and Perſwaſions, into our Communion, is, That thoſe who ſeparate from us, are ſtiff and obſtinate, and will not ſubmit to the Rules and Orders of our Church, and that therefore they ought to be taken away. Which is a goodly *Reaſon* indeed, and every way worthy of the Wiſdom and Integrity of thoſe, who alleage it. And to ſhew, that it is ſo, let it be but tranſferred from the *Eccleſiaſtical* to the *Civil Government*,

Government, from *Church* to *State*; and let all Laws be abrogated, which any great or ſturdy Multitude of Men have no mind to ſubmit to. That is, in other words, let Laws be made *to obey*, and not *to be obeyed*; and, upon theſe terms, I doubt not but you will find that Kingdom (or rather that *Common-wealth*) finely governed in a ſhort time.

And thus I have ſhewn the *Abſurdity*, *Folly* and *Impertinence* of alleaging the *Obligation of Conſcience*, where there is no Law or Command of God mediate or immediate to found that Obligation upon. And yet, as bad as this is, it were well, if the bare *Abſurdity* of theſe Pretences were the worſt thing which we had to charge them with. But it is not ſo. For our ſecond *and next Inference* from the foregoing Principle of the *Vicegerency of Conſcience under God*, will ſhew *us alſo* the *daring Impudence*, and *downright Impiety* of many of thoſe *fulſome* Pleas of Conſcience, which the World has been too often, and too ſcandalouſly abuſed by. For a man to ſin againſt his Conſcience;

ſcience, is doubtleſs a great Wickedneſs. But to make God himſelf a Party in the Sin, is a much greater. For, this is to plead God's Authority againſt God's very Law; which doubles the Sin, and adds *Blaſphemy* to *Rebellion*. And yet ſuch things we have ſeen done amongſt us. And horrid, unnatural, Civil War raiſed, and carried on; the pureſt, and moſt primitively Reformed Church in the World laid in the Duſt, and one of the beſt and moſt innocent Princes, that ever ſat upon a Throne, by a barbarous, unheard-of Violence hurried to his Grave in a bloudy Sheet, and not ſo much as ſuffered to reſt there to this day; and all this by Men acting under the moſt ſolemn Pretences of *Conſcience*, that Hypocriſie perhaps ever yet preſumed to out-face the World with.

And are not the *Principles* of thoſe Wretches ſtill owned, and their *Perſons* Sainted by a Race of Men of the ſame ſtamp, riſen up in their ſtead, the ſworn mortal Enemies of our Church? And yet, for whoſe ſake, ſome Projectors a

mongſt

mongſt us have been turning every Stone to transform, mangle and degrade its noble Conſtitution to the homely, mechanick Model of thoſe *Republican imperfect Churches abroad.* Which, inſtead of being any Rule or Pattern to us, ought in all Reaſon to receive one *from* us. Nay, and ſo ſhort-ſighted are ſome in their *Politicks*, as not to diſcern all this while, that it is not the *Service* but the *Revenue of our Church* which is ſtruck at; and not any *Paſſages* of our *Liturgy*, but the *Property* of our *Lands* which theſe Reformers would have *altered.*

For, I am ſure, no other *Alteration* will ſatisfie *Diſſenting Conſciences*; no, nor this neither, very long, without an utter Abolition of all that looks like Order or Government in the Church. And this we may be ſure of, if we do but conſider both the inveterate Malice of the *Romiſh Party*, which ſets theſe ſilly, unthinking Tools a-work, and withall that monſtrous Principle, or Maxim, which thoſe who divide from us (at leaſt moſt of them) *roundly* profeſs, avow,

vow, and govern their Conſciences by. Namely; *That in all matters that concern Religion, or the Church, though a Thing or Action be never ſo indifferent or lawfull in it ſelf; yet if it be commanded or enjoyned by the Government either Civil or Eccleſiaſtical, it becomes* ipſo facto, *by being ſo commanded, utterly unlawfull, and ſuch as they can, by no means, with good Conſcience comply with.*

Which one deteſtable *Tenet*, or Propoſition, carrying in it the very *Quinteſſence*, and *vital Spirit* of all Non-conformity, abſolutely caſheirs and cuts off all Church-Government at one ſtroke; and is withall ſuch an inſolent, audacious Defiance of Almighty God, under the Mask of *Conſcience*; as perhaps none in former Ages, who ſo much as wore the Name of Chriſtians, ever arrived to, or made profeſſion of.

For, to reſume the Scriptures aforequoted by us; and particularly that in 1 *Pet.* 2. 13. *Submit your ſelves to every Ordinance of Man*, ſays the Spirit of God, ſpeaking by that Apoſtle. But ſay theſe Men;

Men; If the *Ordinance of Man* enjoyns you the Practice of any thing with reference to *Religion* or the *Church*, (though never ſo lawfull in it ſelf,) you cannot with *a good Conſcience ſubmit to the Ordinance of Man in that caſe*: That is, in other words, God ſays, *they muſt ſubmit*; and they ſay, *they muſt not*.

Again, in the fore-mentioned *Heb.* 13. 17. The Apoſtle bids them (and in them, all Chriſtians whatſoever) *to obey thoſe who have the Rule over them*; ſpeaking there of Church-Rulers; for he tells them, *that they were ſuch as watched for their Souls*. But, ſays the *Separatiſt*, If thoſe *who have the Rule over you*, ſhould command you any thing about *Church Affairs*, you *cannot*, you *ought* not, in *Conſcience*, to obey them; For as much as according to that *grand Principle* of theirs, newly ſpecified by us; Every ſuch Command makes Obedience to a thing otherwiſe lawfull, to become unlawfull; and conſequently, upon the ſame Principle, *Rulers muſt not, cannot be obeyed*: Unleſs we could imagine, that

there *may be* ſuch a thing as *Obedience* on the one ſide, when there *muſt be* no ſuch thing as a *Command* on the other; which would make pleaſant ſence of it indeed, and fit for none but a *Diſſenting Reaſon*, as well as *Conſcience*, to aſſert. For though theſe Men have given the World too many terrible Proofs by their own example, That there may be *Commands*, and no *Obedience*; yet, I believe, it will put their *little Logick* hard to it, to prove, That there can be any *Obedience*, where *there is no Command.* And therefore, it unanſwerably follows, That the Abetters of the fore-mentioned Principle plead *Conſcience* in a direct and bare-faced contradiction to God's expreſs Command.

And now (I beſeech you) conſider with your ſelves (for it is no ſlight matter that I am treating of;) I ſay, conſider what you ought to judge of thoſe inſolent, unaccountable Boaſts of *Conſcience*, which, like ſo many *Fire-balls* or *Mouth-Granadoes* (as I may ſo term them) are every day thrown at our Church.

Church. The Apoſtle bids us *prove all Things.* And will you then take Conſcience at every turn, upon its own word? upon the forlorn Credit of every bold Impoſtor who pleads it? Will you ſell your *Reaſon*, your *Church*, and your *Religion*, and both of them the beſt in the World, for a *Name?* and that a wreſted, abuſed, miſ-applied Name? *Knaves*, when they deſign ſome more than ordinary Villainy, never fail to make uſe of this Plea; and it is, becauſe they always find *fools* ready to believe it.

But you will ſay then; What courſe muſt be taken to fence againſt this Impoſture? Why truly, the beſt that I know of, I have told you before; namely, That whenſoever you hear any of theſe ſly, ſanctified Sycophants, with *turned up Eye* and *ſhrug of Shoulder*, pleading *Conſcience for* or *againſt* any Thing, or Practice, you would forthwith ask them, *What Word of God they have to bottom that Judgment of their Conſcience upon?* For-asmuch as *Conſcience*, being *God's Vicegerent*, was never Commiſſioned by him

to govern us in its own Name; but muſt ſtill have ſome Divine *Word* or *Law* to ſupport and warrant it. And therefore call for ſuch a *word*; and that, either from *Scripture*, or from *manifeſt Univerſal Reaſon*, and inſiſt upon it, ſo, as not to be put off without it. And if they can produce you no ſuch thing from either of them, (as they never can;) then reſt aſſured, that they are errant *Cheats* and *Hypocrites*; and that, for all their big Words, the *Conſcience* of ſuch Men is ſo far from being able to give them any true *Confidence towards God*, that it cannot ſo much as give them Confidence towards a wiſe and good Man, no, nor yet towards themſelves, who are far from being either.

And thus I have ſhewn you the *Firſt ground* upon *which the Teſtimony of Conſcience* (*concerning a man's ſpiritual Eſtate*) *comes to be ſo Authentick, and ſo much to be relied on*; to wit, the high Office which it holds, as *the Vicegerent of God himſelf* in the Soul of Man: Together with the *Two grand Inferences* drawn from thence.

The

The firſt of them ſhewing the *Abſurdity, Folly*, and *Impertinence* of pretending *Conſcience* againſt any Thing, when there is no Law of God mediate or immediate againſt it: And the other ſetting forth the *intolerable Blaſphemy and Impiety* of pretending *Conſcience for any Thing*, which the *known* Law of God is directly *againſt*, and ſtands in open defiance *of*.

Proceed we now to the *ſecond Ground*, from which *Conſcience* derives the Credit of its Teſtimony in judging of our ſpiritual Eſtate; and that conſiſts in thoſe *Properties and Qualities which ſo peculiarly fit it for the diſcharge of its fore-mentioned Office, in all things relating to the Soul.* And theſe are Three.

Firſt, The Quickneſs of its Sight.

Secondly, The Tenderneſs of its Senſe: And,

Thirdly and *Laſtly*, Its Rigorous and Impartial way of giving Sentence.

Of each of which in their Order. And firſt, For the *Extraordinary quickneſs and ſagacity of its Sight*, in ſpying out every Thing, which can any way con-

cern the Eſtate of the Soul. As the *Voice* of it (I ſhew) was as loud as *Thunder*; ſo the *Sight* of it is as piercing and *quick* as Lightning. It preſently ſees the Guilt, and looks through all the Flaws, and Blemiſhes of a ſinfull Action; and on the other ſide, obſerves the Candidneſs of a Man's very *Principles*, the ſincerity of his *Intentions*, and the whole Carriage of every Circumſtance in a Vertuous performance. So ſtrict, and accurate is this ſpiritual Inquiſition.

Upon which Account it is; That there is no ſuch Thing, as perfect *Secreſie*, to encourage a rational Mind to the Perpetration of any baſe Action. For a Man muſt firſt extinguiſh, and put out the *Great Light within him*, his *Conſcience*, he muſt get away from himſelf, and ſhake off the *Thouſand Witneſſes*, which he always carries about him, before he can be alone. And where there is no Solitude, I am ſure there can be no Secreſie.

'Tis confeſſed indeed, that a *Long*, and a *Bold* Courſe of Sinning may (as we have

have ſhewn elſewhere) very much dimn, and darken the diſcerning Faculty of Conſcience. For ſo the Apoſtle aſſures us, it did with thoſe in *Rom.* 1. 21. and the ſame, no doubt, it does every Day; but ſtill ſo, as to leave ſuch Perſons, both then, and now, many notable *lucid Intervals*. Sufficient to convince them of their Deviations from *Reaſon*, and *Natural Religion*; and thereby to render them *inexcuſable*; and ſo, in a word, to *ſtop their Mouths*, though not *ſave their Souls*. In *ſhort*, their Conſcience was not *ſtark Dead*, but under a kind of Spiritual Apoplexy, or *Deliquium*. The *Operation* was hindred, but the *Faculty* not deſtroyed. And now, if Conſcience be naturally thus apprehenſive and ſagacious; certainly, this ought to be another great *Ground*, over and above its bare *Authority*, why we ſhould truſt, and rely upon the Reports of it. For *Knowledge* is ſtill the Ground and Reaſon of *Truſt*; and ſo much as any one has of Diſcernment, ſo far he is ſecured from Error and Deception, and for that Cauſe fit to be con-

fided in. No Witneſs ſo much to be credited, as an *Eye-witneſs*. And Conſcience is like the great Eye of the World the *Sun*, always open, always making Diſcoveries. Juſtly therefore, may we by the Light of it take a View of our *Condition*.

2*ly*. Another *Property* or *Quality* of Conſcience, enabling it to judge ſo truly of our ſpiritual Eſtate, is the *Tenderneſs of its Senſe*. For as by the *Quickneſs of its Sight*, it directs us what *to doe*, or *not to* doe; ſo by this *Tenderneſs of its Senſe, it excuſes or accuſes us*, as we have done, or not done, according to thoſe *Directions*. And it is altogether as nice, delicate, and tender in *Feeling*, as it can be perſpicacious, and quick *in Seeing*. For Conſcience (you know) is ſtill called, and accounted the *Eye of the Soul*: and how troubleſome is the leaſt *Mote*, or Duſt falling into the Eye! and how quickly does it *weep*, and *water* upon the leaſt Grievance that afflicts it!

And no leſs exact is the Senſe which Conſcience, preſerved in its Native Purity,

rity, has of the leaſt Sin. For, as *great Sins waſt*, ſo *ſmall ones* are enough to *wound it*; and every *Wound* (you know) is painfull; till it feſters beyond Recovery. As ſoon as ever Sin gives the Blow, Conſcience is the firſt Thing that feels the Smart. No ſooner does the *poyſoned Arrow* enter, but that begins to bleed inwardly. *Sin* and *Sorrow* the Venom of one, and the Anguiſh of the other being Things inſeparable.

Conſcience, if truly tender, never complains without a Cauſe, though I confeſs, there is a new faſhioned Sort of *Tenderneſs of Conſcience*, which always does ſo. But that is like the *Tenderneſs* of a Bog or Quagmire, and it is very dangerous coming near it, for fear of being ſwallowed up by it. For when Conſcience has once acquired this *Artificial Tenderneſs*, it will ſtrangely enlarge, or contract its Swallow as it pleaſes; ſo that ſometimes, a Camel ſhall ſlide down with Eaſe, where, at other times, even a Gnat may chance to ſtick by the Way. It is, indeed, ſuch a

Kind

Kind of *Tenderneſs*, as makes the Perſon, who has it, generally very *tender of obeying the Laws*, but never ſo, of *breaking them*. And therefore, ſince it is commonly at ſuch Variance with the *Law*, I think the *Law* is the fitteſt Thing to deal with it.

In the mean time, let no Man deceive himſelf, or think, that *true Tenderneſs of Conſcience* is any Thing elſe, but an awfull, and exact Senſe of the *Rule*, which ſhould *direct*, and of the *Law*, which ſhould *govern* it. And while it ſteers by this Compaſs, and is ſenſible of every Declination from it, ſo long it is truly and properly *Tender*, and fit to be relied upon, whether it checks, or approves a Man, for what he does. For, from *hence* alone, ſprings its *excuſing* or *accuſing Power*. All accuſation, in the very Nature of the Thing, ſtill ſuppoſing, and being founded upon *ſome Law*: For where there is *no Law*, there can be *no Tranſgreſſion*; and where there can be no *Tranſgreſſion*, I am ſure there ought to be no *Accuſation*.

And

And here, when I ſpeak of *Law*, I mean, both the *Law of God, and of Man* too. For where the Matter of a Law is a *Thing not Evil*, every *Law of Man* is vertually, and at a ſecond Hand, *the Law of God* alſo. For as much as it binds in the ſtrength of the *Divine Law*, commanding Obedience to *Every Ordinance of Man*; as we have already ſhewn. And therefore, all Tenderneſs of Conſcience againſt ſuch Laws, is Hypocriſie, and patronized by none, but Men of Deſign, who look upon it as the fitteſt Engine to get into Power by; which, by the way, when they are once poſſeſſed of; they generally manage with as little *Tenderneſs*, as they do with *Conſcience*. Of which we have had but too much Experience already, and it would be but ill venturing upon more.

In a word, *Conſcience* not acting by, and under a *Law*, is a boundleſs, daring, and preſumptuous thing: and, for any one by vertue thereof, to challenge to himſelf a Privilege of doing what he will, and of being unaccountable for what

what he does, is in all Reaſon too much, *either for Man or Angel* to pretend to.

3*ly*. The third and laſt *Property of Conſcience* which I ſhall mention, and which makes the *Verdict* of it ſo Authentick, is its great and rigorous Impartiality. For, as its wonderfull Apprehenſiveneſs made, that it could not eaſily *be deceived*, ſo this makes, that it will by no means *deceive*. A *Judge*, you know, may be skilfull in underſtanding a Cauſe, and yet partial in giving Sentence. But it is much otherwiſe with Conſcience; no Artifice can induce it to accuſe the Innocent, or to abſolve the Guilty. No; we may as well bribe the Light and the Day to repreſent White things Black, or Black White.

What pitifull things are Power, Rhetorick or Riches, when they would *terrifie*, *diſſwade*, or *buy off* Conſcience from pronouncing Sentence according to the Merit of a Man's Actions? For ſtill (as we have ſhewn) *Conſcience is a Copy of the Divine Law*; and though *Judges* may be bribed, or frightned, yet *Laws* cannot.

The

The *Law* is Impartial and Inflexible; it has no Paſſions or Affections; and conſequently never *accepts Perſons*, nor *diſpenſes with it ſelf*.

For let the moſt potent Sinner upon Earth ſpeak out, and tell us, whether he can command down the Clamours and Revilings of a guilty Conſcience, and impoſe ſilence upon that bold Reprover. He may perhaps for a while put on an high and a big Look; but can he, for all that, look Conſcience out of Countenance? And he may alſo diſſemble a little forced Jollity, that is, he may Court his Miſtreſs, and quaff his Cups, and perhaps ſprinkle them now and then with a few *Dammees*, but who in the mean time beſides his own wretched miſerable ſelf, knows of thoſe ſecret, bitter Infuſions, which that terrible thing, called *Conſcience*, makes into all his Draughts? Believe it, moſt of the appearing Mirth in the World is not *Mirth* but *Art*. The wounded Spirit is not ſeen, but walks under a diſguiſe; and ſtill the leſs you ſee of it, the better it looks.

On

On the contrary, if we conſider the vertuous Perſon, let him declare freely, whether ever his Conſcience checked him for his Innocence, or upbraided him for an Action of Duty; did it ever beſtow any of its hidden Laſhes or concealed Bites on a mind ſeverely Pure, Chaſte, and Religious?

But when Conſcience ſhall *complain, cry out*, and *recoyl*, let a Man deſcend into himſelf with too juſt a Suſpicion, that all is not right within. For ſurely that *Hue-and-cry* was not raiſed upon him for nothing. The ſpoils of a rifled Innocence are born away, and the Man has ſtoln ſomething from his own Soul, for which he ought to be purſued, and will at laſt certainly be over-took.

Let every one therefore attend the Sentence of his Conſcience: For he may be ſure, it will not dawb, nor flatter. It is as ſevere *as Law*; as impartial *as Truth*. It will neither conceal, nor pervert what it knows.

And thus I have done with the Third of thoſe four Particulars at firſt propo-

ſed;

ſed, and ſhewn *whence, and upon what account it is, that the Teſtimony of Conſcience (concerning our ſpiritual Eſtate) comes to be ſo Authentick, and ſo much to be relyed upon:* Namely, For that it is fully empowered and *commiſſioned* to this great Office by God himſelf; and withall, that it is extremely *Quick-ſighted to apprehend and diſcern*; and moreover very *Tender and Senſible*, of every thing that concerns the Soul. And laſtly, That it is moſt *exactly and ſeverely Impartial, in judging* of whatſoever comes before it. Every one of which Qualifications juſtly contributes to the Credit and Authority of the Sentence which ſhall be paſſed by it. And ſo, we are at length arrived at the *Fourth and laſt Thing* propoſed from the words: *Which was to aſſign ſome particular Caſes, or Inſtances, in which this Confidence towards God, ſuggeſted by a rightly informed Conſcience, does moſt eminently ſhew, and exert it ſelf.*

I ſhall mention Three.

1. In our Addreſſes to God *by Prayer.* When a Man ſhall preſume to come and place

place himſelf in the Preſence of the Great *Searcher of Hearts*, and to ask ſomething of him, while his Conſcience is all the while ſmiting him on the Face, and telling him what a Rebel and a Traitour he is to the Majeſty which he ſupplicates; ſurely ſuch an one ſhould think with himſelf, that the God whom he prays to, is *greater than his Conſcience*, and pierces into all the filth and baſeneſs of his Heart with a much clearer, and more ſevere Inſpection. And if ſo, will he not likewiſe reſent the Provocation more deeply, and revenge it upon him more terribly, if Repentance does not divert the Blow? Every ſuch Prayer is big with Impiety and Contradiction, and makes as odious a noiſe in the Ears of God, as the Harangues of one of thoſe Rebel Faſts, or Humiliations in the year *Forty One*; invoking the Bleſſings of Heaven upon ſuch Actions and Deſigns as nothing but Hell could reward.

One of the moſt peculiar Qualifications of an Heart rightly diſpoſed for Prayer is a well grounded Confidence of a Man's

fitneſs

fitneſs for that Duty. In *Heb.* 10. 22. *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full aſſurance of faith*, ſays the Apoſtle. But whence muſt this aſſurance ſpring? Why, we are told in the very next Words of the ſame Verſe: *Having our Hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience*: Otherwiſe the voice of an impure Conſcience will cry much louder than our Prayers, and ſpeak more effectually againſt us, than theſe can intercede for us.

And now, if Prayer be the *great Conduit of mercy*, by which the Bleſſings of Heaven are derived upon the Creature, and the noble Inſtrument of Converſe between God, and the Soul, then ſurely that which renders it ineffectual and loathſome to God, muſt needs be of the moſt miſchievous and deſtructive Conſequence to Mankind imaginable; and conſequently to be removed with all that Earneſtneſs and Concern, with which a Man would rid himſelf of a Plague or a mortal Infection. For it taints and pollutes every Prayer; it turns an *Oblation* into an *Affront*; and the Odours of a Sa-

crifice into the Exhalations of a Carcaſs. And in a word makes the *Heavens over us Braſs*, denying all Paſſage, either to *deſcending Mercies*, *or aſcending Petitions*.

But on the other ſide, when a Man's Breaſt is clear, and the ſame Heart which endites, does alſo encourage his Prayer, when his Innocence puſhes on the Attempt, and vouches the Succeſs. Such an one goes boldly to the Throne of Grace, and his *Boldneſs* is not greater than his *Welcome*. God recognizes the voice of his own *Spirit* interceding within him; and his Prayers are not only *followed*, but even *prevented* with an Anſwer.

2ly. *A Second Inſtance*, in which this Confidence towards God does ſo remarkably ſhew it ſelf, is at the *Time of ſome notable Tryal, or ſharp Affliction*. When a Man's Friends ſhall deſert him, his Relations diſown him, and all Dependencies fail him, and in a word, the whole World frown upon him, certainly it will then be of ſome moment to *have a Friend in the Court of Conſcience*, which ſhall (as it were) buoy up his ſinking Spirits, and

ſpeak

ſpeak greater Things for him than all theſe together can Declaim againſt him.

For as it is moſt certain, that no Height of *Honour*, nor affluence of *Fortune* can keep a Man from being Miſerable, nor indeed Contemptible, when an enraged Conſcience ſhall fly at him, and take him by the Throat; ſo it is alſo as certain, that no Temporal Adverſities can cut off thoſe inward, ſecret, invincible Supplies of Comfort, which *Conſcience* ſhall pour in upon diſtreſſed Innocence, in ſpight, and in defiance of all Worldly Calamities.

Naturaliſts obſerve, that when the Froſt ſeizes upon Wine, they are onely the ſlighter and more wateriſh parts of it that are ſubject to be congealed; but ſtill there is a mighty *Spirit*, which can retreat into *it ſelf*, and there within its own Compaſs lie ſecure from the freezing impreſſion of the Element round about it. And juſt ſo it is with *the Spirit of a Man*, while a *good Conſcience* makes it firm and impenetrable. An outward Affliction can no more benumb

or quell it, than a blaſt of Wind can freeze up the Bloud in a Man's Veins, or a little Showr of Rain ſoak into his Heart, and there quench the Principle of Life it ſelf.

Take the two greateſt Inſtances of Miſery, which, I think, are incident to Humane Nature; to wit, *Poverty*, and *Shame*, and I dare oppoſe *Conſcience* to them both.

And firſt for *Poverty*. Suppoſe a Man ſtripped of all, driven out of Houſe and Home, and perhaps out of his Countrey too (which having, within our memory, happened to ſo many, may too eaſily (God knows) be ſuppoſed again) yet if his Conſcience ſhall tell him, that it was not for any *failure* in his own Duty, but from the *ſucceſs* of anothers Villainy, that all this befell him, why then, his Baniſhment becomes his Preferment, his Rags his Trophies, his Nakedneſs his Ornament; and ſo long as his Innocence is his Repaſt, he feaſts and banquets upon Bread and Water. He has diſarmed his Afflictions, unſtung his Miſeries; and though he has

has not the proper Happineſs of the World, yet he has the greateſt that is to be enjoyed in it.

And for this, we might appeal to the Experience of thoſe great, and good Men, who, in the late Times of Rebellion, and Confuſion, were forced into foreign Countries, for their unſhaken Firmneſs, and Fidelity, to the oppreſſed Cauſe of Majeſty, and Religion, whither their Conſcience did not like a *Fidus Achates*, ſtill bear them company, ſtick cloſe to them, and ſuggeſt Comfort, even when the Cauſes of Comfort were inviſible; and in a word, verify that great ſaying of the Apoſtle in their Mouths; *We have nothing, and yet we poſſeſs all Things.*

For it is not barely a Man's Abridgement in his External Accommodations, which makes him miſerable; but when his Conſcience ſhall hit him in the Teeth, and tell him, that it was his Sin, and his Folly, which brought him under theſe Abridgements. That his preſent ſcanty Meals are but the natural Effects of his former over full ones. That it was

his

his Taylor, and *his Cook*, his *fine Faſhions*, and his *French Ragou's*, which ſequeſtred him; and, in a word, that he came by his *Poverty* as ſinfully, as ſome uſually do by their *Riches*; and conſequently, that Providence treats him with all theſe Severities, not by way of Trial, but by way of Puniſhment, and Revenge. The Mind ſurely, of it ſelf, can feel none of the Burnings of a Fever; but, if my Fever be occaſioned by a Surfeit, and that Surfeit cauſed by my Sin, it is that which adds Fuel to the fiery *Diſeaſe*, *and Rage* to the Diſtemper.

2*ly*. Let us conſider alſo the Caſe of *Calumny*, *and Diſgrace*; Doubtleſs, the Sting of every reproachfull Speech, is the Truth of it; and, *to be conſcious*, is that which gives an Edge, and Keenneſs to the Invective. Otherwiſe, when Conſcience ſhall *plead not guilty to the Charge*, a Man entertains it not as an *Endictment*, but as a *Libel*. He hears all ſuch Calumnies with a generous Unconcernment; and receiving them at one Ear, gives them a free and eaſie Paſſage through the other:

They

They fall upon him like Rain, or Hail upon an oiled Garment; they may make a Noiſe indeed, but can find no Entrance. The very Whiſpers of an acquitting Conſcience will drown the Voice of the loudeſt Slander.

What a long Charge of Hypocriſie, and many other baſe Things, did *Job's Friends* draw up againſt him? but he regarded it no more, than the *Dunghill which he ſate upon*, while his Conſcience enabled him to appeal, even to God Himſelf; and in Spight of Calumny to aſſert, and *hold faſt his Integrity*.

And did not *Joſeph* lie under as black an Infamy, as the Charge of the higheſt Ingratitude, and the lewdeſt Villainy could faſten upon him? Yet his Conſcience raiſed him ſo much above it, that he ſcorned ſo much as to clear himſelf, or to recriminate the Strumpet by a true Narrative of the Matter. For we read nothing of that in the whole Story: Such Confidence, ſuch Greatneſs of Spirit, does a *clear Conſcience* give a Man; always making him more ſolicitous to *preſerve his Innocence*,

Innocence, than concerned to *prove it*. And ſo, we come now to the

3*d*. and *laſt Inſtance*, in which above all others, this *Confidence towards God* does moſt eminently ſhew, and exert it ſelf; and that is at *the Time of Death*. Which ſurely gives the grand Opportunity of trying both the *Strength*, and *Worth* of every Principle. When a Man ſhall be juſt about to quit the Stage of this World, to put off his Mortality, and to deliver up his laſt Accounts to God; at which ſad Time, his Memory ſhall ſerve him for little elſe, but to terrify him with a frightfull Review of his paſt Life, and his former Extravagances ſtripped of all their *Pleaſure*, but retaining their *Guilt*. What is it then, that can promiſe him a fair Paſſage into the other World, or a comfortable Appearance before his dreadfull Judge, when he is there? Not all the *Friends*, and *Intereſts*, all the *Riches* and *Honours* under Heaven, can ſpeak ſo much as a Word *for him*, or one Word of Comfort *to him* in that Condition; they may poſſibly reproach, but they cannot relieve him. No;

No; at this diſconſolate Time, when the buſie Tempter ſhall be more than uſually apt to vex, and trouble him, and the Pains of a dying Body to hinder and diſcompoſe him, and the Settlement of worldly Affairs to diſturb, and confound him; and, in a word, all Things conſpire to make his ſick Bed grievous, and uneaſie. Nothing can then ſtand up againſt all theſe Ruines, and ſpeak *Life* in the midſt of *Death*, *but a clear Conſcience.*

And the Teſtimony of that, ſhall make the Comforts of Heaven deſcend upon his weary Head, like a refreſhing Dew, or Shower upon a parched Ground. It ſhall give him ſome lively Earneſts, and ſecret Anticipations of his approaching Joy. It ſhall bid his Soul go out of the Body undauntedly, and lift up its Head with Confidence, before Saints and Angels. Surely the Comfort, which it conveys at this Seaſon, is ſomething bigger than the Capacities of Mortality; mighty, and unſpeakable; and not to be underſtood, till it comes to be felt.

And now, who would not quit all the *Pleaſures*, and *Traſh*, and *Triſtes*, which are apt to captivate the Heart of Man, and purſue the greateſt Rigors of Piety, and Auſterities of a good Life to purchaſe to himſelf ſuch a Conſcience, as at the Hour of Death, when all the Friendſhips of the World ſhall bid him *adieu*; and the whole Creation turn its Back upon him, ſhall diſmiſs his Soul, and cloſe his Eyes with that bleſſed Sentence; *Well done, thou good and faithfull Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord!*

For he, whoſe Conſcience enables him to look God in the Face, *with Confidence* here, ſhall be ſure to ſee his Face alſo, *with Comfort* hereafter.

Which God of his Mercy grant to us all: To whom be rendred, and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Praiſe, Might, Majeſty, and Dominion, both now, and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.

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